

*Johnson (S.) K*

THE  
W O R K S  
OF THE  
ENGLISH POETS.  
WITH  
P R E F A C E S,  
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL,  
BY SAMUEL JOHNSON.  
AND  
A POETICAL INDEX.

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IN SEVENTY-FIVE VOLUMES.

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VOL. I.

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THE  
WORKS  
OF THE  
ENGLISH POETS.  
WITH  
PREFACES,  
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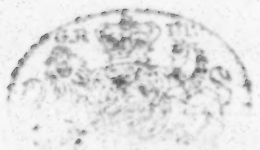
VOLUME THE FIRST.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE republication of the present Collection of English Poetry having given the Proprietors an opportunity of adding the Works of some Authors formerly omitted, and supplying some deficiencies which have been pointed out; they have availed themselves of the hints and recommendations of their friends; and presume, the alterations and additions will be acceptable to the Publick.

The additions to those Authors already printed consist chiefly of pieces which have become known since the publication of the former edition; and which, rendering the works of the Authors more complete, can require no apology. They are such as a Reader of English Poetry will

readily distinguish, and therefore unnecessary to be pointed out.

Of the Authors now first added, some are inserted in compliance with the repeated calls of the Publick; some in deference to the opinions of persons whose taste cannot be disputed; and some have found a place, from the favourable sentiments expressed concerning them to the Publishers from various quarters. In this selection, the Proprietors have not been influenced by any partialities of their own, towards the Authors selected; they have endeavoured to obtain the best opinions, and they have implicitly followed them.

When this Work was originally presented to the Publick, it was Dr. JOHNSON'S intention, to have allotted to each Poet an Advertisement, like those which are found in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates, and a general character. That he was led beyond his intention, will be always a subject of congratulation

tion to every Reader of taste. Few will have the presumption to suppose themselves qualified to succeed him, or the temerity to court a comparison. It was therefore, on due consideration, resolved, in the present additions, to return to Dr. JOHNSON'S original plan. A few dates and facts only are set down, with occasionally a general character. It is probable, a century will elapse before a Genius will arise capable of completing what Dr. JOHNSON left unfinished, in a manner worthy of the original Author.

What has been so generally applauded, will need no apologies to bespeak the candour of the Reader. The present Edition is, therefore, submitted to the examination of the Publick without further Preface.



C O N T E N T S

O F

THE FIRST VOLUME.

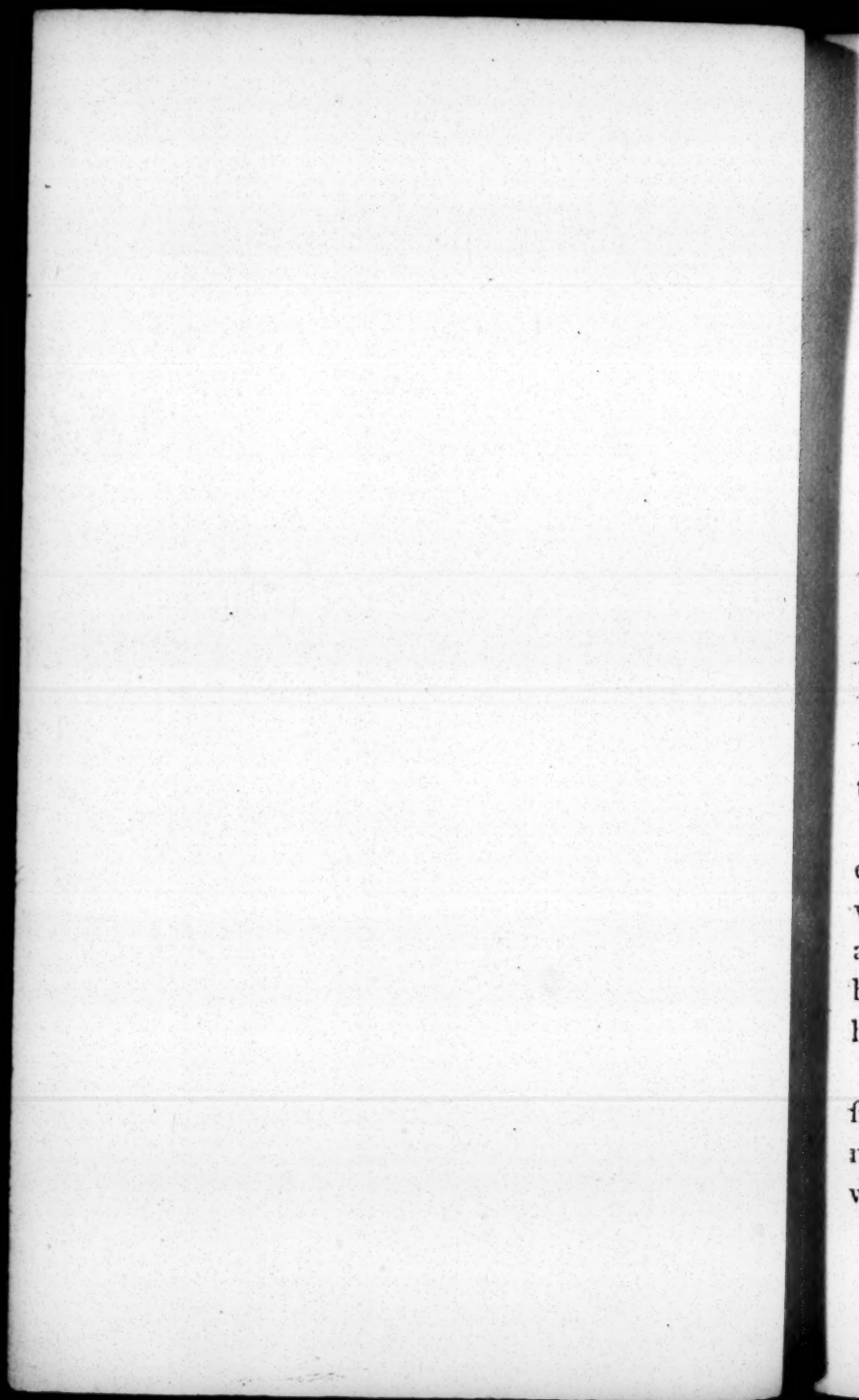
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THE

THE  
LIVES  
OF THE MOST EMINENT  
ENGLISH POETS;  
WITH  
CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS  
ON THEIR  
WORKS.

VOL. I.

B



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# ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE EDITION OF 1783.

**T**HE Bookfellers having determined to publish a Body of English Poetry, I was persuaded to promise them a Preface to the Works of each Author; an undertaking, as it was then presented to my mind, not very extensive or difficult.

My purpose was only to have allotted to every Poet an Advertisement, like those which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates and a general character; but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope, by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure.

In this minute kind of History, the succession of facts is not easily discovered; and I am not without suspicion that some of Dryden's works are placed in wrong years. I have fol-

#### 4      A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

lowed Langbaine\*, as the best authority for his plays; and if I shall hereafter obtain a more correct chronology, will publish it, but I do not yet know that my account is erroneous.

Dryden's Remarks on Rymer have been somewhere † printed before. The former edition I have not seen. This was transcribed for the press from his own manuscript.

As this undertaking was occasional and unforeseen, I must be supposed to have engaged in it with less provision of materials than might have been accumulated by longer premeditation. Of the later writers at least I might, by attention and enquiry, have gleaned many particulars, which would have diversified and enlivened my Biography. These omissions, which it is now useless to lament, have been often supplied by the kindness of Mr. STEEVENS and others; and great assistance has been given me by Mr. SPENCE's Collections, of which I consider the communication as a favour worthy of publick acknowledgement.

\* Langbaine's authority will not support the dates assigned to Dryden's Plays. These are now rectified in the margin by reference to the original Editions, the only guides to be relied on. E.

† In the Edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, by Mr. Colman. E

C O W-



# C O W L E Y.

**T**HE Life of Cowley, notwithstanding the penury of English biography, has been written by Dr. Sprat, an author whose pregnancy of imagination and elegance of language have deservedly set him high in the ranks of literature; but his zeal of friendship, or ambition of eloquence, has produced a funeral oration rather than a history: he has given the character, not the life of Cowley; for he writes with so little detail, that scarcely any thing is distinctly known, but all is shewn confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyrick.

ABRAHAM COWLEY was born in the year one thousand six hundred and eighteen. His father was a grocer, whose condition Dr. Sprat conceals under the general appellation of a citizen and, what would probably not have

B 3

been

been less carefully suppressed, the omission of his name in the register of St. Dunstan's parish, gives reason to suspect that his father was a sectary. Whoever he was, he died before the birth of his son, and consequently left him to the care of his mother; whom Wood represents as struggling earnestly to procure him a literary education, and who, as she lived to the age of eighty, had her solicitude rewarded by seeing her son eminent, and, I hope, by seeing him fortunate, and partaking his prosperity. We know at least, from Sprat's account, that he always acknowledged her care, and justly paid the dues of filial gratitude.

In the window of his mother's apartment lay Spenser's Fairy Queen; in which he very early took delight to read, till, by feeling the charms of verse, he became, as he relates, irrecoverably a poet. Such are the accidents, which, sometimes remembered, and perhaps sometimes forgotten, produce that particular designation of mind, and propensity for some certain science or employment, which is commonly called Genius. The true Genius is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the  
great

great Painter of the present age, had the first fondness for his art excited by the perusal of Richardson's treatise.

By his mother's sollicitation he was admitted into Westminster-school, where he was soon distinguished. He was wont, says Sprat, to relate, "That he had this defect in his memory  
"at that time, that his teachers never could  
"bring it to retain the ordinary rules of  
"grammar."

This is an instance of the natural desire of man to propagate a wonder. It is surely very difficult to tell any thing as it was heard, when Sprat could not refrain from amplifying a commodious incident, though the book to which he prefixed his narrative contained its confutation. A memory admitting some things, and rejecting others, an intellectual digestion that concocted the pulp of learning, but refused the husks, had the appearance of an instinctive elegance, of a particular provision made by Nature for literary politeness. But in the author's own honest relation, the marvel vanishes: he was, he says, such "an enemy to all constraint, that his  
"master never could prevail on him to learn  
"the rules without book." He does not tell

that he could not learn the rules, but that, being able to perform his exercises without them, and being an "enemy to constraint," he spared himself the labour.

Among the English poets, Cowley, Milton, and Pope, might be said "to list in numbers;" and have given such early proofs, not only of powers of language, but of comprehension of things, as to more tardy minds seems scarcely credible. But of the learned puerilities of Cowley there is no doubt, since a volume of his poems was not only written but printed in his thirteenth year\*; containing, with other poetical compositions, "The tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe," written when he was ten years old; and "Constantia and Philetus," written two years after.

While he was yet at school he produced a comedy called "Love's Riddle," though it was not published till he had been some time at Cambridge. This comedy is of the pastoral kind, which requires no acquaintance with the

\* This Volume was not published before 1633, when Cowley was fifteen years old. Dr. Johnson, as well as former Biographers, seems to have been misled by the portrait of Cowley being by mistake marked with the age of thirteen years. E.



living world, and therefore the time at which it was composed adds little to the wonders of Cowley's minority.

In 1636, he was removed to Cambridge\*, where he continued his studies with great intenseness; for he is said to have written, while he was yet a young student, the greater part of his "Davideis;" a work of which the materials could not have been collected without the study of many years, but by a mind of the greatest vigour and activity.

Two years after his settlement at Cambridge he published "Love's Riddle," with a poetical dedication to Sir Kenelm Digby; of whose acquaintance all his contemporaries seem to have been ambitious; and "Naufragium Jocularé," a comedy written in Latin, but without due attention to the ancient models; for it is not loose verse, but mere prose. It was printed, with a dedication in verse to Dr. Comber, master of the college; but having neither the facility of a popular nor the accuracy of a learned work, it seems to be now universally neglected.

At the beginning of the civil war, as the Prince passed through Cambridge in his way to

\* He was a candidate this year at Westminster school for election to Trinity College, but proved unsuccessful. N.



York, he was entertained with a representation of the "Guardian," a comedy, which Cowley says was neither written nor acted, but rough-drawn by him, and repeated by the scholars. That this comedy was printed during his absence from his country, he appears to have considered as injurious to his reputation; though, during the suppression of the theatres, it was sometimes privately acted with sufficient approbation.

In 1643, being now master of arts, he was, by the prevalence of the parliament, ejected from Cambridge, and sheltered himself at St. John's College in Oxford; where, as is said by Wood, he published a satire, called "The Puritan and Papist," which was only inserted in the last collection of his works\*; and so distinguished himself by the warmth of his loyalty, and the elegance of his conversation, that he gained the kindness and confidence of those who attended the King, and amongst others of Lord Falkland, whose notice cast a lustre on all to whom it was extended.

\* In the first edition of this Life, Dr. Johnson wrote, "which was never inserted in any collection of his works;" but he altered the expression when the Lives were collected into volumes. The satire was added to Cowley's works by his desire. N.

About the time when Oxford was furrendered to the parliament, he followed the Queen to Paris, where he became secretary to the Lord Jermin, afterwards Earl of St. Albans, and was employed in such correspondence as the royal cause required, and particularly in cyphering and decyphering the letters that passed between the King and Queen; an employment of the highest confidence and honour. So wide was his province of intelligence, that, for several years, it filled all his days and two or three nights in the week.

In the year 1647, his "Mistress" was published; for he imagined, as he declared in his preface to a subsequent edition, that "poets are "scarce thought freemen of their company "without paying some duties, or obliging "themselves to be true to Love."

This obligation to amorous ditties owes, I believe, its original to the fame of Petrarch, who, in an age rude and uncultivated, by his tuneful homage to his Laura, refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love and poetry. But the basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power. Petrarch was a real lover,  
and

and Laura doubtless deserved his tenderness. Of Cowley, we are told by Barnes\*, who had means enough of information, that, whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion.

This consideration cannot but abate, in some measure, the reader's esteem for the work and the author. To love excellence, is natural; it is natural likewise for the lover to solicit reciprocal regard by an elaborate display of his own qualifications. The desire of pleasing has in different men produced actions of heroism, and effusions of wit; but it seems as reasonable to appear the champion as the poet of an "airy nothing," and to quarrel as to write for what Cowley might have learned from his master Pindar to call the "dream of a shadow."

It is surely not difficult, in the solitude of a college, or in the bustle of the world, to find useful studies and serious employment. No man needs to be so burthened with life as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious

\* Barnesii Anacreontem. Dr. J.

occurrences. The man that sits down to suppose himself charged with treason or peculation, and heats his mind to an elaborate purgation of his character from crimes which he was never within the possibility of committing, differs only by the infrequency of his folly from him who praises beauty which he never saw; complains of jealousy which he never felt; supposes himself sometimes invited, and sometimes forsaken; fatigues his fancy, and ransacks his memory, for images which may exhibit the gaiety of hope, or the gloominess of despair, and dresses his imaginary Chloris or Phyllis sometimes in flowers fading as her beauty, and sometimes in gems lasting as her virtues.

At Paris, as secretary to lord Jermyn, he was engaged in transacting things of real importance with real men and real women, and at that time did not much employ his thoughts upon phantoms of gallantry. Some of his letters to Mr. Bennet, afterwards Earl of Arlington, from April to December in 1650, are preserved in "Miscellanea Aulica," a collection of papers published by Brown. These letters, being written like those of other men whose mind is more on things than words, contribute no otherwise  
to



to his reputation than as they shew him to have been above the affectation of unseasonable elegance, and to have known that the business of a statesman can be little forwarded by flowers of rhetorick.

One passage, however, seems not unworthy of some notice. Speaking of the Scotch treaty then in agitation :

“ The Scotch treaty,” says he, “ is the only  
“ thing now in which we are vitally concerned;  
“ I am one of the last hopers, and yet cannot  
“ now abstain from believing, that an agree-  
“ ment will be made : all people upon the place  
“ incline to that of union. The Scotch will  
“ moderate something of the rigour of their de-  
“ mands ; the mutual necessity of an accord is  
“ visible, the King is persuaded of it. And to  
“ tell you the truth (which I take to be an ar-  
“ gument above all the rest) Virgil has told the  
“ same thing to that purpose.”

This expression from a secretary of the present time, would be considered as merely ludicrous, or at most as an ostentatious display of scholarship ; but the manners of that time were so tinged with superstition, that I cannot but suspect Cowley of having consulted on this great occasion



occasion the Virgilian lots\*, and to have given some credit to the answer of his oracle.

Some

\* Consulting the Virgilian Lots, *Sortes Virgilianæ*, is a method of Divination by the opening of Virgil, and applying to the circumstances of the peruser the first passage in either of the two pages that he accidentally fixes his eye on. It is said, that king Charles I. and lord Falkland, being in the Bodleian library, made this experiment of their future fortunes, and met with passages equally ominous to each. That of the king was the following :

At bello audacis populi vexatus & armis,  
Finibus extorris, complexu avulfus Iuli,  
Auxilium imploret, videatque indigna suorum  
Funera, nec, cum se sub leges pacis iniquæ  
Tradiderit, regno aut optata luce fruatur :  
Sed cadat ante diem, mediaque inhumatus arena.

*Æneid*, book IV. line 615.

Yet let a race untam'd, and haughty foes,  
His peaceful entrance with dire arms oppose,  
Oppress'd with numbers in th' unequal field,  
His men discourag'd, and himself expell'd :  
Let him for succour sue from place to place,  
Torn from his subjects and his son's embrace.  
First let him see his friends in battle slain,  
And their untimely fate lament in vain :  
And when, at length, the cruel war shall cease,  
On hard conditions may he buy his peace ;  
Nor let him then enjoy supreme command,  
But fall untimely by some hostile hand,  
And lie unbury'd on the barren sand.

}

DRYDEN.

Lord

Some years afterwards, “business,” says Sprat, “passed of course into other hands;” and Cowley, being no longer useful at Paris, was in 1656 sent back into England, that, “under pretence of privacy and retirement, he might take occasion of giving notice of the posture of things in this nation.”

Lord FALKLAND’S :

Non hæc, O Palla, dederas promissa parenti,  
Cautius ut sævo velles te credere Marti.  
Haud ignarus eram, quantum nova gloria in armis,  
Et prædulce decus primo certamine posset.  
Primitiæ juvenis miseræ, bellique propinqui  
Dura rudimenta, & nulli exaudita Deorum,  
Vota precesque meæ !

*Æneid, book XI. line 152.*

O Pallas, thou hast fail’d thy plighted word,  
To fight with caution, not to tempt the sword ;  
I warn’d thee, but in vain, for well I knew  
What perils youthful ardour would pursue ;  
That boiling blood wou’d carry thee too far,  
Young as thou wert to dangers raw, to war.  
O curst essay of arms, disastrous doom,  
Prelude of bloody fields and fights to come ;  
Hard elements of un auspicious war,  
Vain vows to Heaven, and unavailing care. DRYDEN.

Hoffman, in his *Lexicon*, gives a very satisfactory account of this practice of seeking fates in books : and says, that it was used by the Pagans, the Jewish Rabbins, and even the early Christians; the latter taking the New Testament for their oracle. H.

Soon

Soon after his return to London, he was seized by some messengers of the usurping powers, who were sent out in quest of another man; and being examined, was put into confinement, from which he was not dismissed without the security of a thousand pounds given by Dr. Scarborough.

This year he published his poems, with a preface, in which he seems to have inserted something, suppressed in subsequent editions, which was interpreted to denote some relaxation of his loyalty. In this preface he declares, that “his desire had been for some days past, and did “still very vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and “to forsake this world for ever.”

From the obloquy which the appearance of submission to the usurpers brought upon him, his biographer has been very diligent to clear him, and indeed it does not seem to have lessened his reputation. His wish for retirement we can easily believe to be undissembled; a man harraffed in one kingdom, and persecuted in another, who, after a course of business that employed all his days and half his nights in cypher-

ing and decyphering, comes to his own country and steps into a prison, will be willing enough to retire to some place of quiet, and of safety. Yet let neither our reverence for a genius, nor our pity for a sufferer, dispose us to forget that, if his activity was virtue, his retreat was cowardice.

He then took upon himself the character of Physician, still, according to Sprat, with intention “to dissemble the main design of his coming over,” and, as Mr. Wood relates, “complying with the men then in power (which was much taken notice of by the royal party), he obtained an order to be created Doctor of Physick, which being done to his mind, (whereby he gained the ill-will of some of his friends), he went into France again, having made a copy of verses on Oliver’s death.”

This is no favourable representation, yet even in this not much wrong can be discovered. How far he complied with the men in power, is to be enquired before he can be blamed. It is not said that he told them any secrets, or assisted them by intelligence, or any other act. If  
he



he only promised to be quiet, that they in whose hands he was might free him from confinement, he did what no law of society prohibits.

The man whose miscarriage in a just cause has put him in the power of his enemy may, without any violation of his integrity, regain his liberty, or preserve his life, by a promise of neutrality: for the stipulation gives the enemy nothing which he had not before; the neutrality of a captive may be always secured by his imprisonment or death. He that is at the disposal of another, may not promise to aid him in any injurious act, because no power can compel active obedience. He may engage to do nothing, but not to do ill.

There is reason to think that Cowley promised little. It does not appear that his compliance gained him confidence enough to be trusted without security, for the bond of his bail was never cancelled; nor that it made him think himself secure, for at that dissolution of government, which followed the death of Oliver, he returned into France, where he resumed his former station, and staid till the Restoration.



“He continued,” says his biographer, “under these bonds till the general deliverance;” it is therefore to be supposed, that he did not go to France, and act again for the King without the consent of his bondsman; that he did not shew his loyalty at the hazard of his friend, but by his friend’s permission.

Of the verses on Oliver’s death, in which Wood’s narrative seems to imply something encomiastick, there has been no appearance. There is a discourse concerning his government, indeed, with verses intermixed, but such as certainly gained its author no friends among the abettors of usurpation.

A doctor of physick however he was made at Oxford, in December 1657; and in the commencement of the Royal Society, of which an account has been given by Dr. Birch, he appears busy among the experimental philosophers with the title of Dr. Cowley.

There is no reason for supposing that he ever attempted practice; but his preparatory studies have contributed something to the honour of his country. Considering Botany as necessary to a physician, he retired into Kent to gather plants;

plants; and as the predominance of a favourite study affects all subordinate operations of the intellect, Botany in the mind of Cowley turned into Poetry. He composed in Latin several books on Plants, of which the first and second display the qualities of Herbs, in elegiac verse; the third and fourth, the beauties of Flowers in various measures; and in the fifth and sixth, the uses of trees in heroick numbers.

At the same time were produced from the same university, the two great Poets, Cowley and Milton, of dissimilar genius, of opposite principles; but concurring in the cultivation of Latin Poetry, in which the English, till their works and May's poem appeared\*, seemed unable to contest the palm with any other of the lettered nations.

If the Latin performances of Cowley and Milton be compared (for May I hold to be superior to both), the advantage seems to lie on the side of Cowley. Milton is generally con-

\* By May's Poem, we are here to understand a continuation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* to the death of Julius Cæsar, by Thomas May, an eminent poet and historian, who flourished in the reigns of James and Charles I, and of whom a life is given in the *Biographia Britannica*. H.

tent to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language; Cowley, without much loss of purity or elegance, accommodates the diction of Rome to his own conceptions.

At the Restoration, after all the diligence of his long service, and with consciousness not only of the merit of fidelity, but of the dignity of great abilities, he naturally expected ample preferments; and, that he might not be forgotten by his own fault, wrote a Song of Triumph. But this was a time of such general hope, that great numbers were inevitably disappointed; and Cowley found his reward very tediously delayed. He had been promised by both Charles the first and second the Mastership of the Savoy; "but he lost it," says Wood, "by certain persons, enemies to the Muses."

The neglect of the court was not his only mortification; having, by such alteration as he thought proper, fitted his old Comedy of the "Guardian" for the stage, he produced it\* under the title of "The Cutter of Coleman-street†." It was treated on the stage with great

\* 1663.

† Here is an error in the designation of this comedy, which our author copied from the title-page of the latter editions of Cowley's

great severity, and was afterwards censured as a satire on the king's party.

Mr. Dryden, who went with Mr. Sprat to the first exhibition, related to Mr. Dennis, "that when they told Cowley, how little favour had been shewn him, he received the news of his ill success, not with so much firmness as might have been expected from so great a man."

What firmness they expected, or what weakness Cowley discovered, cannot be known. He that misses his end will never be as much pleased as he that attains it, even when he can impute no part of his failure to himself; and when the end is to please the multitude, no man, perhaps, has a right, in things admitting of gradation and comparison, to throw the whole blame upon his judges, and totally to exclude diffidence and shame by a haughty consciousness of his own excellence.

For the rejection of this play, it is difficult now to find the reason: it certainly has, in a

Cowley's works: the title of the play itself is without the article, "Cutter of Coleman-street," and that, because a merry sharking fellow about the town, named Cutter, is a principal character in it. H.



very great degree, the power of fixing attention and exciting merriment. From the charge of disaffection he exculpates himself in his preface, by observing how unlikely it is that, having followed the royal family through all their distresses, "he should chuse the time of their restoration to begin a quarrel with them." It appears, however, from the Theatrical Register of Downes the Prompter, to have been popularly considered as a satire on the royalists.

That he might shorten this tedious suspense, he published his pretensions and his discontent, in an ode called "The Complaint;" in which he styles himself the *melancholy* Cowley. This met with the usual fortune of complaints, and seems to have excited more contempt than pity.

These unlucky incidents are brought, maliciously enough, together in some stanzas, written about that time, on the choice of a laureat; a mode of satire, by which, since it was first introduced by Suckling, perhaps every generation of poets has been teased:

Savoy-missing Cowley came into the court,

Making apologies for his bad play;

Every one gave him so good a report,

That Apollo gave heed to all he could say:

Nor



Nor would he have had, 'tis thought, a rebuke,  
Unless he had done some notable folly ;  
Writ verses unjustly in praise of Sam Tuke,  
Or printed his pitiful Melancholy.

His vehement desire of retirement now came again upon him. "Not finding," says the morose Wood, "that preferment conferred upon him which he expected, while others for their money carried away most places, he retired discontented into Surrey."

"He was now," says the courtly Sprat, "weary of the vexations and formalities of an active condition. He had been perplexed with a long compliance to foreign manners. He was fatiated with the arts of a court; which sort of life, though his virtue made it innocent to him, yet nothing could make it quiet. Those were the reasons that made him to follow the violent inclination of his own mind, which, in the greatest throng of his former business, had still called upon him, and represented to him the true delights of solitary studies, of temperate pleasures, and a moderate revenue below the malice and flatteries of fortune."

So

So differently are things seen, and so differently are they shewn; but actions are visible, though motives are secret. Cowley certainly retired; first to Barn-elms, and afterwards to Chertsey, in Surrey. He seems, however, to have lost part of his dread of the *\*hum of men*. He thought himself now safe enough from intrusion, without the defence of mountains and oceans; and, instead of seeking shelter in America, wisely went only so far from the bustle of life as that he might easily find his way back, when solitude should grow tedious. His retreat was at first but slenderly accommodated; yet he soon obtained, by the interest of the earl of St. Albans and the duke of Buckingham, such a lease of the Queen's lands as afforded him an ample income.

By the lover of virtue and of wit it will be solicitously asked, if he now was happy. Let them peruse one of his letters accidentally preserved by Peck, which I recommend to the consideration of all that may hereafter pant for solitude.

\* L'Allegro of Milton. Dr. J.

“ To

“ To Dr. THOMAS SPRAT.

“ Chertsey, 21 May, 1665.

“ The first night that I came hither I caught  
“ so great a cold, with a defluxion of rheum,  
“ as made me keep my chamber ten days. And,  
“ two after, had such a bruise on my ribs with  
“ a fall, that I am yet unable to move or turn  
“ myself in my bed. This is my personal for-  
“ tune here to begin with. And, besides, I can  
“ get no money from my tenants, and have my  
“ meadows eaten up every night by cattle put  
“ in by my neighbours. What this signifies,  
“ or may come to in time, God knows; if it  
“ be ominous, it can end in nothing less than  
“ hanging. Another misfortune has been,  
“ and stranger than all the rest, that you have  
“ broke your word with me, and failed to  
“ come, even though you told Mr. Bois that  
“ you would. This is what they call *Monstri*  
“ *simile*. I do hope to recover my late hurt so  
“ farre within five or six days (though it be  
“ uncertain yet whether I shall ever recover it)  
“ as to walk about again. And then, methinks,  
“ you and I and *the Dean* might be very merry  
“ upon

“ upon S. Anne’s Hill. You might very conveniently come hither the way of Hampton Town, lying there one night. I write this in pain, and can say no more: *Verbum sapienti.*”

He did not long enjoy the pleasure or suffer the uneasiness of solitude; for he died at the Porch-house \* in Chertsey in 1667, in the 49th year of his age.

He was buried with great pomp near Chaucer and Spenser; and king Charles pronounced, “ That Mr. Cowley had not left behind him a better man in England.” He is represented by Dr. Sprat as the most amiable of mankind; and this posthumous praise may safely be credited, as it has never been contradicted by envy or by faction.

Such are the remarks and memorials which I have been able to add to the narrative of Dr. Sprat; who, writing when the feuds of the civil war were yet recent, and the minds of either party were easily irritated, was obliged to pass over many transactions in general expres-

\* Now in the possession of Mr. Clark, Alderman of London.



fions, and to leave curiosity often unsatisfied. What he did not tell, cannot however now be known. I must therefore recommend the perusal of his work, to which my narration can be considered only as a slender supplement.

---

COWLEY, like other poets who have written with narrow views, and, instead of tracing intellectual pleasures in the minds of man, paid their court to temporary prejudices, has been at one time too much praised, and too much neglected at another.

Wit, like all other things subject by their nature to the choice of man, has its changes and fashions, and at different times takes different forms. About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets; of whom, in a criticism on the works of Cowley, it is not improper to give some account.

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to shew their learning was their whole endeavour; but, unluckily resolving to shew it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry they only wrote



wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry *τέχνη μιμητική*, an imitative art, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets; for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing; they neither copied nature for life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.

Those however who deny them to be poets, allow them to be wits. Dryden confesses of himself and his contemporaries, that they fall below Donne in wit, but maintains that they surpass him in poetry.

If Wit be well described by Pope, as being, “that which has been often thought, but was never before so well expressed,” they certainly never attained, nor ever sought it; for they endeavoured to be singular in their thoughts, and were careless of their diction. But Pope’s account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous: he depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces

duces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.

If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as Wit, which is at once natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that, which he that never found it wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

But Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtilty surprises; but the reader commonly thinks  
his

his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

From this account of their compositions it will be readily inferred, that they were not successful in representing or moving the affections. As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising, they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and the pleasure of other minds: they never enquired what, on any occasion, they should have said or done; but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as Beings looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure; as Epicurean deities making remarks on the actions of men, and the vicissitudes of life, without interest and without emotion. Their courtship was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had been never said before.

Nor was the sublime more within their reach than the pathetick; for they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of thought which at once fills the whole mind, and of which the first effect is sudden astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity  
is

is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. It is with great propriety that Subtlety, which in its original import means exility of particles, is taken in its metaphorical meaning for nicety of distinction. Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytick; they broke every image into fragments; and could no more represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature, or the scenes of life, than he, who dissects a sun-beam with a prism, can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.

What they wanted however of the sublime, they endeavoured to supply by hyperbole; their amplification had no limits; they left not only reason but fancy behind them; and produced combinations of confused magnificence, that not only could not be credited, but could not be imagined.

D

Yet



Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth: if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery, and hereditary families, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables.

In perusing the works of this race of authors, the mind is exercised either by recollection or inquiry; either something already learned is to be retrieved, or something new is to be examined. If their greatness seldom elevates, their acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is not always gratified, at least the powers of reflexion and comparison are employed; and in the mass of materials which ingenious absurdity has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may be sometimes found, buried perhaps in grossness of expression, but  
useful



useful to those who know their value ; and such as, when they are expanded to perspicuity, and polished to elegance, may give lustre to works which have more propriety though less copiousness of sentiment.

This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marino and his followers, had been recommended by the example of Donne, a man of a very extensive and various knowledge ; and by Jonson, whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines than in the cast of his sentiments.

When their reputation was high, they had undoubtedly more imitators, than time has left behind. Their immediate successors, of whom any remembrance can be said to remain, were Suckling, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Cleiveland, and Milton. Denham and Waller sought another way to fame, by improving the harmony of our numbers. Milton tried the metaphysick style only in his lines upon Hobson the Carrier. Cowley adopted it, and excelled his predecessors, having as much sentiment and more musick. Suckling neither improved versification, nor abounded in conceits. The fashionable style

remained chiefly with Cowley ; Suckling could not reach it, and Milton disdained it.

CRITICAL REMARKS are not easily understood without examples ; and I have therefore collected instances of the modes of writing by which this species of poets, for poets they were called by themselves and their admirers, was eminently distinguished.

AS the authors of this race were perhaps more desirous of being admired than understood, they sometimes drew their conceits from recesses of learning not very much frequented by common readers of poetry. Thus Cowley on *Knowledge* :

The sacred tree midst the fair orchard grew ;  
The phoenix Truth did on it rest,  
And built his perfum'd nest,  
That right Porphyrian tree which did true logic  
shew.  
Each leaf did learned notions give,  
And th' apples were demonstrative :  
So clear their colour and divine,  
The very shade they cast did other lights outshine.  
On

On Anacreon continuing a lover in his old age :

Love was with thy life entwin'd,  
 Close as heat with fire is join'd,  
 A powerful brand prescrib'd the date  
 Of thine, like Meleager's fate.  
 Th' antiperistasis of age  
 More inflam'd thy amorous rage.

In the following verses we have an allusion to a Rabbinical opinion concerning Manna :

Variety I ask not : give me one  
 To live perpetually upon.  
 The Person Love does to us fit,  
 Like manna, has the taste of all in it.

Thus *Donne* shews his medicinal knowledge in some encomiastick verses :

In every thing there naturally grows  
 A Balsamum to keep it fresh and new,  
 If 'twere not injur'd by extrinsique blows ;  
 Your youth and beauty are this balm in you.  
 But you, of learning and religion,  
 And virtue and such ingredients, have made  
 A mithridate, whose operation  
 Keeps off, or cures what can be done or said.

Though the following lines of Donne, on the last night of the year, have something in them too scholastic, they are not inelegant:

This twilight of two years, not past nor next,  
 Some emblem is of me, or I of this,  
 Who, meteor-like, of stuff and form perplex,  
 Whose what and where in disputation is,  
 If I should call me any thing, should miss.  
 I sum the years and me, and find me not  
 Debtor to th' old, nor creditor to th' new,  
 That cannot say, my thanks I have forgot,  
 Nor trust I this with hopes; and yet scarce true  
 This bravery is, since these times shew'd me you.  
 DONNE.

Yet more abstruse and profound is *Donne's* reflection upon Man as a Microcosm:

If men be worlds, there is in every one  
 Something to answer in some proportion  
 All the world's riches: and in good men, this  
 Virtue, our form's form, and our soul's soul is.

OF thoughts so far fetched, as to be not only unexpected, but unnatural, all their books are full.

To



To a Lady, who wrote poefies for rings.

They, who above do various circles find,  
 Say, like a ring th' æquator heaven does bind.  
 When heaven fhall be adorn'd by thee,  
 (Which then more heaven than 'tis, will be)  
 'Tis thou muft write the poefy there,  
 For it wanteth one as yet,  
 Then the fun pafs through't twice a year,  
 The fun, which is esteem'd the god of wit.

COWLEY.

The difficulties which have been raifed about identity in philosophy, are by Cowley with ftill more perplexity applied to Love :

Five years ago (fays ftory) I lov'd you,  
 For which you call me moft inconstant now;  
 Pardon me, madam, you miftake the man;  
 For I am not the fame that I was then;  
 No flefh is now the fame 'twas then in me,  
 And that my mind is chang'd yourfelf may fee.  
 The fame thoughts to retain ftill, and intents,  
 Were more inconstant far: for accidents  
 Muft of all things moft ftangely inconstant prove,  
 If from one fubject they t' another move:  
 My members then, the father members were  
 From whence thefe take their birth, which now are  
 here.

If then this body love what th' other did,  
'Twere incest, which by nature is forbid.

The love of different women is, in geographical poetry, compared to travels through different countries :

Hast thou not found each woman's breast  
(The land where thou hast travelled)

Either by savages possesst,

Or wild, and uninhabited?

What joy could'st take, or what repose,  
In countries so uncivilis'd as those?

Lust, the scorching dog-star, here

Rages with immoderate heat;

Whilst Pride, the rugged Northern Bear,

In others makes the cold too great.

And where these are temperate known,

The soil's all barren sand, or rocky stone.

COWLEY.

A Lover, burnt up by his affection, is compared to Egypt:

The fate of Egypt I sustain,

And never feel the dew of rain

From clouds which in the head appear;

But all my too much moisture owe

To overflowings of the heart below.

COWLEY.

The

The lover supposes his lady acquainted with  
the ancient laws of augury and rites of sacrifice :

And yet this death of mine, I fear,  
Will ominous to her appear :

When found in every other part,  
Her sacrifice is found without an heart.

For the last tempest of my death  
Shall sigh out that too, with my breath.

That the chaos was harmonised, has been  
recited of old ; but whence the different sounds  
arose remained for a modern to discover :

Th' ungovern'd parts no correspondence knew ;  
An artless war from thwarting motions grew ;  
Till they to number and fixt rules were brought.  
Water and air he for the Tenor chose,  
Earth made the Base ; the Treble, flame arose.

COWLEY.

The tears of lovers are always of great poetical account ; but Donne has extended them into worlds. If the lines are not easily understood, they may be read again :

On a round ball

A workman, that hath copies by, can lay  
An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,  
And quickly make that, which was nothing, all.

So

So doth each tear,  
 Which thee doth wear,  
 A globe, yea world, by that impressi<sup>o</sup>n grow,  
 Till thy tears mixt with mine do overflow  
 This world, by waters sent from thee my heaven  
 dissolved so.

On reading the following lines, the reader  
 may perhaps cry out—*Confusion worse confounded.*

Here lies a she sun, and a he moon here,  
 She gives the best light to his sphere,  
 Or each is both, and all, and so  
 They unto one another nothing owe.

DONNE.

Who but Donne would have thought that  
 a good man is a telescope?

Though God be our true glafs through which we  
 see

All, since the being of all things is he,  
 Yet are the trunks, which do to us derive  
 Things in proportion fit, by perspective  
 Deeds of good men; for by their living here,  
 Virtues, indeed remote, seem to be near.

Who would imagine it possible that in a very  
 few lines so many remote ideas could be brought  
 together:

Since



Since 'tis my doom, Love's undershrieve,

Why this reprieve?

Why doth my she advowson fly

Incumbency?

To sell thyself dost thou intend

By candle's end,

And hold the contrast thus in doubt,

Life's taper out?

Think but how soon the market fails,

Your sex lives faster than the males;

And if to measure age's span,

The sober Julian were th' account of man,

Whilst you live by the fleet Gregorian.

CLEIVELAND.

OF enormous and disgusting hyperboles,  
these may be examples :

By every wind that comes this way,

Send me at least a sigh or two,

Such and so many I'll repay

As shall themselves make winds to get to you.

COWLEY.

In tears I'll waste these eyes,

By Love so vainly fed;

So lust of old the Deluge punished.

COWLEY.

All

All arm'd in brass the richest drefs of war,  
 (A dismal glorious fight) he shone afar.  
 The sun himself started with sudden fright,  
 To see his beams return so dismal bright.

COWLEY.

An universal consternation:

His bloody eyes he hurls round, his sharp paws  
 Tear up the ground; then runs he wild about,  
 Lashing his angry tail and roaring out.  
 Beasts creep into their dens, and tremble there;  
 Trees, though no wind is stirring, shake with fear;  
 Silence and horror fill the place around:  
 Echo itself dares scarce repeat the sound.

COWLEY.

THEIR fictions were often violent and  
 unnatural.

Of his Mistress bathing.

The fish around her crowded, as they do  
 To the false light that treacherous fishers shew,  
 And all with as much ease might taken be,  
 As she at first took me:  
 For ne'er did light so clear

Among

Among the waves appear,  
Though every night the sun himself set there.

COWLEY.

The poetical effect of a lover's name upon  
glafs :

My name engrav'd herein  
Doth contribute my firmness to this glafs ;  
Which, ever since that charm, hath been  
As hard as that which grav'd it was.

DONNE.

Their conceits were sometimes slight and  
trifling.

On an inconstant woman :

He enjoys the calm sunshine now,  
And no breath stirring hears,  
In the clear heaven of thy brow,  
No smallest cloud appears.  
He sees thee gentle, fair and gay,  
And trusts the faithless April of thy May.

COWLEY.

Upon a paper written with the juice of lemon,  
and read by the fire :

Nothing yet in thee is seen,  
But when a genial heat warms thee within,

A new-

A new-born wood of various lines there grows;  
 Here buds an L, and there a B,  
 Here spouts a V, and there a T,  
 And all the flourishing letters stand in rows.

COWLEY.

As they fought only for novelty, they did not much enquire whether their allusions were to things high or low, elegant or gross; whether they compared the little to the great, or the great to the little.

Phyick and Chirurgery for a Lover.

Gently, ah gently, madam, touch  
 The wound, which you yourself have made;  
 That pain must needs be very much,  
 Which makes me of your hand afraid.  
 Cordials of pity give me now,  
 For I too weak of purgings grow.

COWLEY.

The World and a Clock.

Mahol, th' inferior world's fantastic face,  
 Thro' all the turns of matter's maze did trace;  
 Great Nature's well-set clock in pieces took;  
 On all the springs and smallest wheels did look  
 Of life and motion, and with equal art  
 Made up the whole again of every part.

COWLEY.

A coal-



A coal-pit has not often found its poet; but that it may not want its due honour, Cleiveland has paralleled it with the Sun:

The moderate value of our guiltless ore  
Makes no man atheist, and no woman whore;  
Yet why should hallow'd vestal's sacred shrine  
Deserve more honour than a flaming mine?  
These pregnant wombs of heat would fitter be,  
Than a few embers, for a deity.  
Had he our pits, the Persian would admire  
No sun, but warm's devotion at our fire:  
He'd leave the trotting whipster, and prefer  
Our profound Vulcan 'bove that waggoner.  
For wants he heat, or light? or would have store  
Or both? 'tis here: and what can suns give more?  
Nay, what's the sun but, in a different name,  
A coal-pit rampant, or a mine on flame!  
Then let this truth reciprocally run,  
The sun's heaven's coalery, and coals our sun.

Death, a Voyage:

No family  
E'er rigg'd a soul for heaven's discovery,  
With whom more venturers might boldly dare  
Venture their stakes, with him in joy to share.

DONNE.

Their

Their thoughts and expressions were sometimes grossly absurd, and such as no figures or licence can reconcile to the understanding.

A Lover neither dead nor alive :

Then down I laid my head  
Down on cold earth ; and for a while was dead,  
And my freed soul to a strange somewhere fled :  
Ah, sottish soul, said I,  
When back to its cage again I saw it fly ;  
Fool to resume her broken chain !  
And row her galley here again !  
Fool, to that body to return  
Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to burn !  
Once dead, how can it be,  
Death should a thing so pleasant seem to thee,  
That thou should'st come to live it o'er again in me ?

A Lover's heart, a hand grenado.

Wo to her stubborn heart, if once mine come  
Into the self-same room,  
'Twill tear and blow up all within,  
Like a grenado shot into a magazin.  
Then shall Love keep the ashes, and torn parts,  
Of both our broken hearts :  
Shall out of both one new one make :  
From her's th' allay ; from mine, the metal take.

COWLEY.

The

## The poetical Propagation of Light :

The Prince's favour is diffus'd o'er all,  
 From which all fortunes, names, and natures fall ;  
 Then from those wombs of stars, the Bride's bright  
 eyes,

At every glance a constellation flies  
 And sows the court with stars, and doth prevent  
 In light and power, the all-ey'd firmament :  
 First her eye kindles other ladies' eyes,  
 Then from their beams their jewels lustres rise ;  
 And from their jewels torches do take fire,  
 And all is warmth, and light, and good desire.

D O N N E .

THEY were in very little care to clothe  
 their notions with elegance of dress, and there-  
 fore miss the notice and the praise which are  
 often gained by those, who think less, but are  
 more diligent to adorn their thoughts.

That a Mistress beloved is fairer in idea  
 than in reality, is by Cowley thus expressed :

Thou in my fancy dost much higher stand,  
 Than women can be plac'd by Nature's hand ;  
 And I must needs, I'm sure, a loser be,  
 To change thee, as thou'rt there, for very thee.

E

T h a t

That prayer and labour should co-operate,  
are thus taught by Donne :

In none but us, are such mixt engines found,  
As hands of double office ; for the ground  
We till with them ; and them to heaven we raise ;  
Who prayerless labours, or, without this, prays,  
Doth but one half, that's none.

By the same author, a common topick, the  
danger of procrastination, is thus illustrated :

— That which I should have begun  
In my youth's morning, now late must be done ;  
And I, as giddy travellers must do,  
Which stray or sleep all day, and having lost [post.  
Light and strength, dark and tir'd, must then ride

All that man has to do is to live and die ;  
the sum of humanity is comprehended by  
Donne in the following lines :

Think in how poor a prison thou didst lie ;  
After enabled but to suck and cry.  
Think, when 'twas grown to most, twas a poor inn,  
A province pack'd up in two yards of skin,  
And that usurp'd, or threaten'd with a rage  
Of sicknesses, or their true mother, age.  
But think that death hath now enfranchis'd thee ;  
Thou hast thy expansion now, and liberty ;

Think,

Think, that a rusty piece discharg'd is flown  
In pieces, and the bullet is his own,  
And freely flies : this to thy soul allow, [now.  
Think thy shell broke, think thy soul hatch'd but

THEY were sometimes indelicate and disgusting. Cowley thus apostrophises beauty :

—Thou tyrant, which leav'st no man free !  
Thou subtle thief, from whom nought safe can be !  
Thou murderer, which hast kill'd, and devil,  
which would'st damn me.

Thus he addresses his Mistress :

Thou who, in many a propriety,  
So truly art the fun to me,  
Add one more likeness, which I'm sure you can,  
And let me and my fun beget a man.

Thus he represents the meditations of a Lover :

Though in thy thoughts scarce any tracts have been  
So much as of original sin,  
Such charms thy beauty wears as might  
Desires in dying confess saints excite.

Thou with strange adultery  
Dost in each breast a brothel keep ;  
Awake, all men do lust for thee,  
And some enjoy thee when they sleep.



## The true taste of Tears.

Hither with crystal vials, lovers, come,  
 And take my tears, which are love's wine,  
 And try your mistress' tears at home;  
 For all are false, that taste not just like mine.

DONNE.

This is yet more indelicate:

As the sweet sweat of roses in a still,  
 As that which from chaf'd musk-cat's pores doth  
 As the almighty balm of th' early East, [trill,  
 Such are the sweet drops of my mistress' breast.  
 And on her neck her skin such lustre sets,  
 They seem no sweat drops, but pearl coronets:  
 Rank sweaty froth thy mistress' brow defiles.

DONNE.

THEIR expressions sometime raise horror, when they intend perhaps to be pathetic:

As men in hell are from diseases free,  
 So from all other ills am I,  
 Free from their known formality:  
 But all pains eminently lie in thee.

COWLEY.

THEY

THEY were not always strictly curious, whether the opinions from which they drew their illustrations were true; it was enough that they were popular. Bacon remarks, that some falsehoods are continued by tradition, because they supply commodious allusions.

It gave a piteous groan, and so it broke;  
In vain it something would have spoke:  
The love within too strong for't was,  
Like poison put into a Venice-glass.

COWLEY.

IN forming descriptions, they looked out not for images, but for conceits. Night has been a common subject, which poets have contended to adorn. Dryden's Night is well known; Donne's is as follows:

Thou seest me here at midnight, now all rest:  
Time's dead low-water; when all minds divest  
To-morrow's business, when the labourers have  
Such rest in bed, that their last church-yard grave,  
Subject to change, will scarce be a type of this,  
Now when the client, whose last hearing is  
To-morrow, sleeps; when the condemned man,  
Who when he opes his eyes, must shut them then

Again by death, although sad watch he keep,  
 Doth practise dying by a little sleep,  
 Thou at this midnight see'st me.

IT must be however confessed of these writers, that if they are upon common subjects often unnecessarily and unpoetically subtle; yet where scholastick speculation can be properly admitted, their copiousness and acuteness may justly be admired. What Cowley has written upon Hope, shews an unequalled fertility of invention:

Hope, whose weak being ruin'd is,  
 Alike if it succeed, and if it miss;  
 Whom good or ill does equally confound,  
 And both the horns of Fate's dilemma wound.  
 Vain shadow, which dost vanquish quite,  
 Both at full noon and perfect night!  
 The stars have not a possibility  
 Of blessing thee;  
 If things then from their end we happy call,  
 'Tis Hope is the most hopeless thing of all.  
 Hope, thou bold taster of delight, [it quite!  
 Who, whilst thou should'st but taste, devour'st  
 Thou bring'st us an estate, yet leav'st us poor,  
 By clogging it with legacies before!  
 The joys which we entire should wed,  
 Come deflower'd virgins to our bed;

Good

Good fortunes without gain imported be,  
Such mighty custom's paid to thee :  
For joy, like wine, kept close does better taste ;  
If it take air before, its spirits waste.

To the following comparison of a man that travels, and his wife that stays at home, with a pair of compasses, it may be doubted whether absurdity or ingenuity has the better claim :

Our two souls therefore, which are one,  
Though I must go, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion,  
Like gold to airy thinness beat.  
If they be two, they are two so  
As stiff twin-compasses are two,  
Thy soul the fixt foot, makes no show  
To move, but doth, if th' other do.  
And though it in the centre sit,  
Yet when the other far doth roam,  
It leans, and hearkens after it,  
And grows erect, as that comes home.  
Such wilt thou be to me, who must  
Like th' other foot obliquely run.  
Thy firmness makes my circle just,  
And makes me end, where I begun.

DONNE.

In all these examples it is apparent, that whatever is improper or vitious, is produced by a voluntary deviation from nature in pursuit of something new and strange; and that the writers fail to give delight, by their desire of exciting admiration.

HAVING



HAVING thus endeavoured to exhibit a general representation of the style and sentiments of the metaphysical poets, it is now proper to examine particularly the works of Cowley, who was almost the last of that race, and undoubtedly the best.

His Miscellanies contain a collection of short compositions, written some as they were dictated by a mind at leisure, and some as they were called forth by different occasions; with great variety of style and sentiment, from burlesque levity to awful grandeur. Such an assemblage of diversified excellence no other poet has hitherto afforded. To choose the best, among many good, is one of the most hazardous attempts of criticism. I know not whether Scaliger himself has persuaded many readers to join with him in his preference of the two favorite odes, which he estimates in his raptures at the value of a kingdom. I will however venture to recommend Cowley's first piece, which ought to be inscribed *To my muse*, for want of which the second couplet is without reference. When the title is added, there  
will

will still remain a defect ; for every piece ought to contain in itself whatever is necessary to make it intelligible. Pope has some epitaphs without names ; which are therefore epitaphs to be lett, occupied indeed for the present, but hardly appropriated.

The ode on Wit is almost without a rival. It was about the time of Cowley that *Wit*, which had been till then used for *Intellection*, in contradistinction to *Will*, took the meaning, whatever it be, which it now bears.

Of all the passages in which poets have exemplified their own precepts, none will easily be found of greater excellence than that in which Cowley condemns exuberance of Wit:

Yet 'tis not to adorn and gild each part,

That shews more cost than art.

Jewels at nose and lips but ill appear ;

Rather than all things wit, let none be there.

Several lights will not be seen,

If there be nothing else between.

Men doubt, because they stand so thick i'th'sky,

If those be stars which paint the galaxy.

In his verses to Lord Falkland, whom every man of his time was proud to praise, there are,

as there must be in all Cowley's compositions, some striking thoughts, but they are not well wrought. His elegy on Sir Henry Wotton is vigorous and happy, the series of thoughts is easy and natural, and the conclusion, though a little weakened by the intrusion of Alexander, is elegant and forcible.

It may be remarked, that in this Elegy, and in most of his encomiastic poems, he has forgotten or neglected to name his heroes.

In his poem on the death of Harvey, there is much praise, but little passion, a very just and ample delineation of such virtues as a studious privacy admits, and such intellectual excellence as a mind not yet called forth to action can display. He knew how to distinguish, and how to commend the qualities of his companion; but when he wishes to make us weep, he forgets to weep himself, and diverts his sorrow by imagining how his crown of bays, if he had it, would *crackle* in the *fire*. It is the odd fate of this thought to be worse for being true. The bay-leaf crackles remarkably as it burns; as therefore this property was not assigned it by chance, the mind must be thought sufficiently at ease that could attend to such  
mi-

minuteness of physiology. But the power of Cowley is not so much to move the affections, as to exercise the understanding.

The *Chronicle* is a composition unrivalled and alone: such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitude, such a succession of images, and such a dance of words, it is in vain to expect except from Cowley. His strength always appears in his agility, his volatility is not the flutter of a light, but the bound of an elastic mind. His levity never leaves his learning behind it; the moralist, the politician, and the critick, mingle their influence even in this airy frolick of genius. To such a performance Suckling could have brought the gaiety, but not the knowledge; Dryden could have supplied the knowledge, but not the gaiety.

The verses to Davenant, which are vigorously begun, and happily concluded, contain some hints of criticism very justly conceived and happily expressed. Cowley's critical abilities have not been sufficiently observed: the few decisions and remarks which his prefaces and his notes on the *Davideis* supply, were at that time accessions to English literature, and  
shew



shew such skill as raises our wish for more examples.

The lines from Jersey are a very curious and pleasing specimen of the familiar descending to the burlesque.

His two metrical disquisitions *for* and *against* Reason, are no mean specimens of metaphysical poetry. The stanzas against knowledge produce little conviction. In those which are intended to exalt the human faculties, Reason has its proper task assigned it; that of judging, not of things revealed, but of the reality of revelation. In the verses *for* Reason is a passage which Bentley, in the only English verses which he is known to have written, seems to have copied, though with the inferiority of an imitator.

The holy Book like the eighth sphere doth shine

With thousand lights of truth divine,

So numberless the stars that to our eye

It makes all but one galaxy :

Yet Reason must assist too ; for in seas

So vast and dangerous as these,

Our course by stars above we cannot know

Without the compass too below.

After <sup>1</sup>



After this, says Bentley \* :

Who travels in religious jars,  
Truth mix'd with error, shade with rays,  
Like Whiston wanting pyx or stars,  
In ocean wide or sinks or strays.

Cowley seems to have had, what Milton is believed to have wanted, the skill to rate his own performances by their just value, and has therefore closed his *Miscellanies* with the verses upon *Crashaw*, which apparently excel all that have gone before them, and in which there are beauties which common authors may justly think not only above their attainment, but above their ambition.

To the *Miscellanies* succeed the *Anacreontiques*, or paraphrastical translations of some little poems, which pass, however justly, under the name of *Anacreon*. Of those songs dedicated to festivity and gaiety, in which even the morality is voluptuous, and which teach nothing but the enjoyment of the present day, he has given rather a pleasing than a faithful representation, having retained their spriteliness, but lost their simplicity. The *Anacreon* of

\* Doddsley's Collection of Poems, vol. V.

E.

Cowley,

Cowley, like the Homer of Pope, has admitted the decoration of some modern graces, by which he is undoubtedly more amiable to common readers, and perhaps, if they would honestly declare their own perceptions, to far the greater part of those whom courtesy and ignorance are content to style the Learned.

These little pieces will be found more finished in their kind than any other of Cowley's works. The diction shews nothing of the mould of time, and the sentiments are at no great distance from our present habitudes of thought. Real mirth must be always natural, and nature is uniform. Men have been wise in very different modes; but they have always laughed the same way.

Levity of thought naturally produced familiarity of language, and the familiar part of language continues long the same: the dialogue of comedy, when it is transcribed from popular manners and real life, is read from age to age with equal pleasure. The artifices of inversion, by which the established order of words is changed, or of innovation, by which new words or new meanings of words are introduced, is practised, not by those who talk to  
be

be understood, but by those who write to be admired.

The Anacreontiques therefore of Cowley give now all the pleasure which they ever gave. If he was formed by nature for one kind of writing more than for another, his power seems to have been greatest in the familiar and the festive.

The next class of his poems is called *The Mistress*, of which it is not necessary to select any particular pieces for praise or censure. They have all the same beauties and faults, and nearly in the same proportion. They are written with exuberance of wit, and with copiousness of learning; and it is truly asserted by Sprat, that the plenitude of the writer's knowledge flows in upon his page, so that the reader is commonly surprised into some improvement. But, considered as the verses of a lover, no man that has ever loved will much commend them, They are neither courtly nor pathetick, have neither gallantry nor fondness. His praises are too far sought, and too hyperbolical, either to express love, or to excite it; every stanza is crowded with darts and flames, with wounds and death, with mingled souls, and with broken hearts.

The

The principal artifice by which *The Mistress* is filled with conceits is very copiously displayed by Addison. Love is by Cowley, as by other poets, expressed metaphorically by flame and fire; and that which is true of real fire is said of love, or figurative fire, the same word in the same sentence retaining both significations. Thus, "observing the cold regard of his mistress's eyes, and at the same time their power of producing love in him, he considers them as burning glasses made of ice. Finding himself able to live in the greatest extremities of love, he concludes the torrid zone to be habitable. Upon the dying of a tree, on which he had cut his loves, he observes, that his flames had burnt up and withered the tree."

These conceits Addison calls mixed wit; that is, wit which consists of thoughts true in one sense of the expression, and false in the other. Addison's representation is sufficiently indulgent. That confusion of images may entertain for a moment; but being unnatural, it soon grows wearisome. Cowley delighted in it, as much as if he had invented it; but, not to mention the ancients, he might have found



it full-blown in modern Italy. Thus Sannazaro :

Aspice quam variis distingar Lesbica curis !

Uror, & heu ! nostro manat ab igne liquor ;  
Sum Nilus, sumque Ætna simul ; restringite flamas

O lacrimæ, aut lacrimas ebibe flamma meas.

One of the severe theologians of that time censured him as having published *a book of profane and lascivious Verses*. From the charge of profaneness, the constant tenour of his life, which seems to have been eminently virtuous, and the general tendency of his opinions, which discover no irreverence of religion, must defend him ; but that the accusation of lasciviousness is unjust, the perusal of his works will sufficiently evince.

Cowley's *Mistress* has no power of seduction : " she plays round the head, but reaches not " the heart." Her beauty and absence, her kindness and cruelty, her disdain and inconstancy, produce no correspondence of emotion. His poetical account of the virtues of plants, and colours of flowers, is not perused with more sluggish frigidity. The compositions are  
such



such as might have been written for penance by a hermit, or for hire by a philosophical rhymmer who had only heard of another sex; for they turn the mind only on the writer, whom, without thinking on a woman but as the subject for his task, we sometimes esteem as learned, and sometimes despise as trifling, always admire as ingenious, and always condemn as unnatural.

The Pindarique Odes are now to be considered; a species of composition, which Cowley thinks Pancirolus might have counted *in his list of the lost inventions of antiquity*, and which he has made a bold and vigorous attempt to recover.

The purpose with which he has paraphrased an Olympick and Nemæan Ode, is by himself sufficiently explained. His endeavour was, not to shew *precisely what Pindar spoke, but his manner of speaking*. He was therefore not at all restrained to his expressions, nor much to his sentiments; nothing was required of him, but not to write as Pindar would not have written.

Of the Olympick Ode the beginning is, I think, above the original in elegance, and the conclusion below it in strength. The connec-

tion is supplied with great perspicuity, and the thoughts, which to a reader of less skill seem thrown together by chance, are concatenated without any abruption. Though the English ode cannot be called a translation, it may be very properly consulted as a commentary.

The spirit of Pindar is indeed not every where equally preserved. The following pretty lines are not such as his *deep mouth* was used to pour :

Great Rhea's son,  
If in Olympus' top where thou  
Sitt'st to behold thy sacred show,  
If in Alpheus' silver flight,  
If in my verse thou take delight,  
My verse, great Rhea's son, which is  
Lofty as that, and smooth as this.

In the Nemæan ode the reader must, in mere justice to Pindar, observe that whatever is said of *the original new moon, her tender forehead and her horns*, is superadded by his paraphrast, who has many other plays of words and fancy unsuitable to the original, as,

The table, free for every guest,  
No doubt will thee admit,  
And feast more upon thee, than thou on it.

He

He sometimes extends his author's thoughts without improving them. In the Olympionick an oath is mentioned in a single word, and Cowley spends three lines in swearing by the *Castalian Stream*. We are told of Theron's bounty, with a hint that he had enemies, which Cowley thus enlarges in rhyming prose:

But in this thankless world the giver  
Is envied even by the receiver;  
'Tis now the cheap and frugal fashion  
Rather to hide than own the obligation:  
Nay, 'tis much worse than so;  
It now an artifice does grow  
Wrongs and injuries to do,  
Lest men should think we owe.

It is hard to conceive that a man of the first rank in learning and wit, when he was dealing out such minute morality in such feeble diction, could imagine, either waking or dreaming, that he imitated Pindar.

In the following odes, where Cowley chooses his own subjects, he sometimes rises to dignity truly Pindarick; and, if some deficiencies of language be forgiven, his strains are such as those of the Theban Bard were to his contemporaries:

Begin the song, and strike the living lyre:  
Lo how the years to come, a numerous and well-  
fitted quire,  
All hand in hand do decently advance,  
And to my song with smooth and equal measure  
dance;  
While the dance lasts, how long foe'er it be,  
My musick's voice shall bear it company;  
Till all gentle notes be drown'd  
In the last trumpet's dreadful sound.

After such enthusiasm, who will not lament to find the poet conclude with lines like these!

But stop, my Muse—  
Hold thy Pindaric Pegasus closely in,  
Which does to rage begin—  
—'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd horse—  
'Twill no unskilful touch endure,  
But flings writer and reader too that sits not sure.

The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to the last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality; for of the greatest things the parts are little; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus all the power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration.



meration; and the force of metaphors is lost, when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied.

Of this we have a very eminent example in the ode intituled *The Muse*, who goes to *take the air* in an intellectual chariot, to which he harnesses Fancy and Judgement, Wit and Eloquence, Memory and Invention: how he distinguished Wit from Fancy, or how Memory could properly contribute to Motion, he has not explained; we are however content to suppose that he could have justified his own fiction, and wish to see the Muse begin her career; but there is yet more to be done.

Let the *postilion* Nature mount, and let  
 The *coachman* Art be fet;  
 And let the airy *footmen*, running all beside,  
 Make a long row of goodly pride;  
 Figures, conceits, raptures, and sentences,  
 In a well-worded dress,  
 And innocent loves, and pleasant truths, and useful lies,  
 In all their gaudy *liveries*.

Every mind is now disgusted with this cumber of magnificence ; yet I cannot refuse myself the four next lines :

Mount, glorious queen, thy travelling throne,  
And bid it to put on ;  
For long though cheerful is the way,  
And life alas allows but one ill winter's day.

In the same ode, celebrating the power of the Muse, he gives her prescience, or, in poetical language, the foresight of events hatching in futurity ; but having once an egg in his mind, he cannot forbear to shew us that he knows what an egg contains :

Thou into the close nests of Time dost peep,  
And there with piercing eye  
Through the firm shell and the thick white dost  
Years to come a-forming lie, [spy  
Close in their sacred fecundine asleep.

The same thought is more generally, and therefore more poetically, expressed by Casimir, a writer, who has many of the beauties and faults of Cowley :

Omnibus mundi Dominator horis  
Aptat urgendas per inane pennas,  
Pars adhuc nido latet, & futuros  
Crescit in annos.

Cow-

Cowley, whatever was his subject, seems to have been carried, by a kind of destiny, to the light and the familiar, or to conceits which require still more ignoble epithets. A slaughter in the Red Sea *new dies the waters name*; and England, during the Civil War, was *Albion no more, nor to be named from white*. It is surely by some fascination not easily surmounted, that a writer professing to revive *the noblest and highest writing in verse*, makes this address to the new year:

Nay, if thou lov'st me, gentle year,  
Let not so much as love be there,  
Vain fruitless love I mean; for, gentle year,  
Although I fear,  
There's of this caution little need,  
Yet, gentle year, take heed  
How thou dost make  
Such a mistake;  
Such love I mean alone  
As by thy cruel predecessors has been shewn;  
For, though I have too much cause to doubt it,  
I fain would try, for once, if life can live without it.

The reader of this will be inclined to cry out with Prior—

*Ye Critics, say,  
How poor to this was Pindar's style!*

Even those who cannot perhaps find in the Isthmian or Nemæan songs what Antiquity has disposed them to expect, will at least see that they are ill represented by such puny poetry; and all will determine that, if this be the old Theban strain, it is not worthy of revival.

To the disproportion and incongruity of Cowley's sentiments must be added the uncertainty and looseness of his measures. He takes the liberty of using in any place a verse of any length, from two syllables to twelve. The verses of Pindar have, as he observes, very little harmony to a modern ear; yet by examining the syllables we perceive them to be regular, and have reason enough for supposing that the ancient audiences were delighted with the sound. The imitator ought therefore to have adopted what he found, and to have added what was wanting; to have preserved a constant return of the same numbers, and to have supplied smoothness of transition and continuity of thought.

It is urged by Dr. Sprat, that the *irregularity of numbers is the very thing* which makes *that*  
kind



*kind of poesy fit for all manner of subjects.* But he should have remembered, that what is fit for every thing can fit nothing well. The great pleasure of verse arises from the known measure of the lines, and uniform structure of the stanzas, by which the voice is regulated, and the memory relieved.

If the Pindaric style be, what Cowley thinks it, *the highest and noblest kind of writing in verse*, it can be adapted only to high and noble subjects; and it will not be easy to reconcile the poet with the critick, or to conceive how that can be the highest kind of writing in verse, which, according to Sprat, *is chiefly to be preferred for its near affinity to prose.*

This lax and lawless versification so much concealed the deficiencies of the barren, and flattered the laziness of the idle, that it immediately overspread our books of poetry; all the boys and girls caught the pleasing fashion, and they that could do nothing else could write like Pindar. The rights of antiquity were invaded, and disorder tried to break into the Latin: a poem \*

\* First published in quarto, 1669, under the title of "Car-  
men Pindaricum in Theatrum Sheldonianum in solennibus  
magnifici Operis Encœniis. Recitatum Julii die 9, Anno  
1669, a Corbetto Owen, A.B. Æd. Chr. Alumno Authore." E.

on the Sheldonian Theatre, in which all kinds of verse are shaken together, is unhappily inserted in the *Musæ Anglicanæ*. Pindarism prevailed above half a century; but at last died gradually away, and other imitations supply its place.

The Pindarique Odes have so long enjoyed the highest degree of poetical reputation, that I am not willing to dismiss them with unabated censure; and surely though the mode of their composition be erroneous, yet many parts deserve at least that admiration which is due to great comprehension of knowledge, and great fertility of fancy. The thoughts are often new, and often striking; but the greatness of one part is disgraced by the littleness of another; and total negligence of language gives the noblest conceptions the appearance of a fabric august in the plan, but mean in the materials. Yet surely those verses are not without a just claim to praise; of which it may be said with truth, that no man but Cowley could have written them.

The Davideis now remains to be considered; a poem which the author designed to have extended to twelve books, merely, as he makes

no scruple of declaring, because the *Æneid* had that number; but he had leisure or perseverance only to write the third part. Epick poems have been left unfinished by Virgil, Statius, Spenser, and Cowley. That we have not the whole *Davideis* is, however, not much to be regretted; for in this undertaking Cowley is, tacitly at least, confessed to have miscarried. There are not many examples of so great a work, produced by an author generally read, and generally praised, that has crept through a century with so little regard. Whatever is said of Cowley, is meant of his other works. Of the *Davideis* no mention is made; it never appears in books, nor emerges in conversation. By the *Spectator* it has been once quoted; by *Rymer* it has once been praised; and by *Dryden*, in “*Mac Flecknoe*,” it has once been imitated; nor do I recollect much other notice from its publication till now, in the whole succession of English literature.

Of this silence and neglect, if the reason be inquired, it will be found partly in the choice of the subject, and partly in the performance of the work.

Sacred

Sacred History has been always read with submissive reverence, and an imagination overawed and controlled. We have been accustomed to acquiesce in the nakedness and simplicity of the authentic narrative, and to repose on its veracity with such humble confidence, as suppresses curiosity. We go with the historian as he goes, and stop with him when he stops. All amplification is frivolous and vain; all addition to that which is already sufficient for the purposes of religion, seems not only useless, but in some degree profane.

Such events as were produced by the visible interposition of Divine Power are above the power of human genius to dignify. The miracle of Creation, however it may seem with images, is best described with little diffusion of language: *He spake the word, and they were made.*

We are told that Saul *was troubled with an evil spirit*; from this Cowley takes an opportunity of describing hell, and telling the history of Lucifer, who was, he says,

Once general of a gilded host of sprites,  
Like Hesper leading forth the spangled nights;

But



But down like lightning, which him struck, he  
 came,  
 And roar'd at his first plunge into the flame.

Lucifer makes a speech to the inferior agents of mischief, in which there is something of heathenism, and therefore of impropriety; and, to give efficacy to his words, concludes by lashing *his breast with his long tail*. Envy, after a pause, steps out, and among other declarations of her zeal utters these lines :

Do thou but threat, loud storms shall make reply,  
 And thunder echo to the trembling sky.  
 Whilst raging seas swell to so bold an height,  
 As shall the fire's proud element affright.  
 Th' old drudging Sun, from his long-beaten way,  
 Shall at thy voice start, and misguide the day.  
 The jocund orbs shall break their measur'd pace,  
 And stubborn poles change their allotted place.  
 Heaven's gilded troops shall flutter here and there,  
 Leaving their boasting songs tun'd to a sphere.

Every reader feels himself weary with this useless talk of an allegorical Being.

It is not only when the events are confessedly miraculous, that fancy and fiction lose their effect: the whole system of life, while  
 the

the Theocracy was yet visible, has an appearance so different from all other scenes of human action, that the reader of the Sacred Volume habitually considers it as the peculiar mode of existence of a distinct species of mankind, that lived and acted with manners uncommunicable; so that it is difficult even for imagination to place us in the state of them whose story is related, and by consequence their joys and griefs are not easily adopted, nor can the attention be often interested in any thing that befalls them.

To the subject thus originally indisposed to the reception of poetical embellishments, the writer brought little that could reconcile impatience, or attract curiosity. Nothing can be more disgusting than a narrative spangled with conceits, and conceits are all that the Davideis supplies.

One of the great sources of poetical delight is description, or the power of presenting pictures to the mind. Cowley gives inferences instead of images, and shews not what may be supposed to have been seen, but what thoughts the sight might have suggested. When Virgil describes the stone which Turnus lifted against  
*Æneas,*

*Æneas*, he fixes the attention on its bulk and weight:

*Saxum circumspicit ingens,  
Saxum antiquum, ingens, campo quod forte jacebat  
Limes agro positus, litem ut discerneret arvis.*

Cowley says of the stone with which Cain slew his brother,

I saw him fling the stone, as if he meant  
At once his murder and his monument.

Of the sword taken from Goliath, he says,

A sword so great, that it was only fit  
To cut off his great head that came with it.

Other poets describe death by some of its common appearances. Cowley says, with a learned allusion to sepulchral lamps real or fabulous,

'Twixt his right ribs deep pierc'd the furious blade,  
And open'd wide those secret vessels where  
Life's light goes out, when first they let in air.

But he has allusions vulgar as well as learned.  
In a visionary succession of kings:

Joas at first does bright and glorious show,  
In life's fresh morn his fame does early crow.

Describing an undisciplined army, after having said with elegance,

His forces seem'd no army, but a crowd  
Heartless, unarm'd, disorderly, and loud,

he gives them a fit of the ague.

The allusions, however, are not always to vulgar things: he offends by exaggeration as much as by diminution:

The king was plac'd alone, and o'er his head  
A well-wrought heaven of filk and gold was spread.

Whatever he writes is always polluted with some conceit:

Where the sun's fruitful beams give metals birth,  
Where he the growth of fatal gold does see,  
Gold, which alone more influence has than he.

In one passage he starts a sudden question, to the confusion of philosophy:

Ye learned heads, whom ivy garlands grace,  
Why does that twining plant the oak embrace?  
The oak for courtship most of all unfit,  
And rough as are the winds that fight with it.

His expressions have sometimes a degree of meanness that surpasses expectation:

Nay,



Nay, gentle guests, he cries, since now you're in,  
The story of your gallant friend begin.

In a simile descriptive of the Morning :

As glimmering stars just at th' approach of day,  
Cashier'd by troops, at last drop all away.

The dress of Gabriel deserves attention :

He took for skin a cloud most soft and bright,  
That e'er the midday sun pierc'd through with  
light,

Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread,  
Wash'd from the morning beauties deepest red ;  
An harmless flattering meteor shone for hair,  
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care ;  
He cuts out a silk mantle from the skies,  
Where the most sprightly azure pleas'd the eyes ;  
This he with starry vapours sprinkles all,  
Took in their prime ere they grow ripe and fall ;  
Of a new rainbow ere it fret or fade,  
The choicest piece cut out, a scarf is made.

This is a just specimen of Cowley's imagery :  
what might in general expressions be great and  
forcible, he weakens and makes ridiculous by  
branching it into small parts. That Gabriel  
was invested with the softest or brightest co-

lours of the sky, we might have been told, and been dismissed to improve the idea in our different proportions of conception; but Cowley could not let us go till he had related where Gabriel got first his skin, and then his mantle, then his lace, and then his scarf, and related it in the terms of the mercer and taylor.

Sometimes he indulges himself in a digression, always conceived with his natural exuberance, and commonly, even where it is not long, continued till it is tedious:

I' th' library a few choice authors stood,  
 Yet 'twas well stor'd, for that small store was good;  
 Writing, man's spiritual physic, was not then  
 Itself, as now, grown a disease of men.  
 Learning (young virgin) but few suitors knew;  
 The common prostitute she lately grew,  
 And with the spurious brood loads now the press;  
 Laborious effects of idleness.

As the Davideis affords only four books, though intended to consist of twelve, there is no opportunity for such criticisms as Epick poems commonly supply. The plan of the whole work is very imperfectly shewn by the third part. The duration of an unfinished action

tion cannot be known. Of characters either not yet introduced, or shewn but upon few occasions, the full extent and the nice discriminations cannot be ascertained. The fable is plainly implex, formed rather from the *Odyfsey* than the *Iliad*: and many artifices of diversification are employed, with the skill of a man acquainted with the best models. The past is recalled by narration, and the future anticipated by vision: but he has been so lavish of his poetical art, that it is difficult to imagine how he could fill eight books more without practising again the same modes of disposing his matter; and perhaps the perception of this growing incumbrance inclined him to stop. By this abruptness, posterity lost more instruction than delight. If the continuation of the *Davideis* can be missed, it is for the learning that had been diffused over it, and the notes in which it had been explained.

Had not his characters been depraved like every other part by improper decorations, they would have deserved uncommon praise. He gives Saul both the body and mind of a hero:

His way once chose, he forward thrust outright,  
Nor turn'd aside for danger or delight.

And the different beauties of the lofty Merah and the gentle Michol are very justly conceived and strongly painted.

Rymer has declared the Davideis superior to the *Jerusalem of Tasso*, "which," says he, "the poet, with all his care, has not totally "purged from pedantry." If by pedantry is meant that minute knowledge which is derived from particular sciences and studies, in opposition to the general notions supplied by a wide survey of life and nature, Cowley certainly errs, by introducing pedantry far more frequently than Tasso. I know not, indeed, why they should be compared; for the resemblance of Cowley's work to Tasso's is only that they both exhibit the agency of celestial and infernal spirits, in which however they differ widely; for Cowley supposes them commonly to operate upon the mind by suggestion; Tasso represents them as promoting or obstructing events by external agency.

Of particular passages that can be properly compared, I remember only the description of Heaven, in which the different manner of the two writers is sufficiently discernible. Cowley's is scarcely description, unless it be possible to de-



describe by negatives; for he tells us only what there is not in heaven. Tasso endeavours to represent the splendours and pleasures of the regions of happiness. Tasso affords images, and Cowley sentiments. It happens, however, that Tasso's description affords some reason for Rymer's censure. He says of the Supreme Being,

Hà sotto i piedi e fato e la natura  
Ministri humili, e'l moto, e ch'il misura.

The second line has in it more of pedantry than perhaps can be found in any other stanza of the poem.

In the perusal of the Davideis, as of all Cowley's works, we find wit and learning unprofitably squandered. Attention has no relief; the affections are never moved; we are sometimes surpris'd, but never delighted, and find much to admire, but little to approve. Still however it is the work of Cowley, of a mind capacious by nature, and replenish'd by study.

In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found, that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskillful selection; with much thought; but with little imagery;

that he is never pathetick, and rarely sublime, but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound.

It is said by Denham in his elegy,

To him no author was unknown ;  
Yet what he writ was all his own.

This wide position requires less limitation, when it is affirmed of Cowley, than perhaps of any other poet.—He read much, and yet borrowed little.

His character of writing was indeed not his own: he unhappily adopted that which was predominant. He saw a certain way to present praise, and not sufficiently enquiring by what means the ancients have continued to delight through all the changes of human manners, he contented himself with a deciduous laurel, of which the verdure in its spring was bright and gay, but which time has been continually stealing from his brows.

He was in his own time considered as of unrivalled excellence. Clarendon represents him as having taken a flight beyond all that went before him; and Milton is said to have declared,

clared, that the three greatest English poets were Spenser, Shakspeare, and Cowley.

His manner he had in common with others : but his sentiments were his own. Upon every subject he thought for himself ; and such was his copiousness of knowledge, that something at once remote and applicable rushed into his mind ; yet it is not likely that he always rejected a commodious idea merely because another had used it : his known wealth was so great, that he might have borrowed without loss of credit.

In his elegy on Sir Henry Wotton, the last lines have such resemblance to the noble epigram of Grotius upon the death of Scaliger, that I cannot but think them copied from it, though they are copied by no servile hand.

One passage in his *Mistress* is so apparently borrowed from Donne, that he probably would not have written it, had it not mingled with his own thoughts, so as that he did not perceive himself taking it from another :

Although I think thou never found wilt be,

Yet I'm resolv'd to search for thee ;

The search itself rewards the pains.

So, though the chymic his great secret miss,

(For

(For neither it in Art nor Nature is)

Yet things well worth his toil he gains :

And does his charge and labour pay

With good unsought experiments by the way.

COWLEY.

Some that have deeper digg'd Love's mine than I,

Say, where his centric happiness doth lie :

I have lov'd, and got, and told ;

But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,

I should not find that hidden mystery ;

Oh, 'tis imposture all :

And as no chymic yet th' elixir got,

But glorifies his pregnant pot,

If by the way to him befall

Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,

So lovers dream a rich and long delight,

But get a winter-seeming summer's night.

Jonson and Donne, as Dr. Hurd remarks, were then in the highest esteem.

It is related by Clarendon, that Cowley always acknowledges his obligation to the learning and industry of Jonson ; but I have found no traces of Jonson in his works : to emulate Donne, appears to have been his purpose ; and from Donne he may have learned that familiarity with religious images, and that light allusion to sacred things, by which readers



ders far short of sanctity are frequently offended; and which would not be born in the present age, when devotion, perhaps not more fervent, is more delicate.

Having produced one passage taken by Cowley from Donne, I will recompense him by another which Milton seems to have borrowed from him. He says of Goliath,

His spear, the trunk was of a lofty tree,  
Which Nature meant some tall ship's mast  
should be.

Milton of Satan :

His spear, to equal which the tallest pine  
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast  
Of some great admiral, were but a wand,  
He walked with.

His diction was in his own time censured as negligent. He seems not to have known, or not to have considered, that words being arbitrary must owe their power to association, and have the influence, and that only, which custom has given them. Language is the dress of thought: and as the noblest mien, or most graceful action, would be degraded and obscured by a garb appropriated to the gross employments

ployments of rusticks or mechanicks; so the most heroick sentiments will lose their efficacy, and the most splendid ideas drop their magnificence, if they are conveyed by words used commonly upon low and trivial occasions, debased by vulgar mouths, and contaminated by inelegant applications.

Truth indeed is always truth, and reason is always reason; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value, and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction: but gold may be so concealed in baser matter, that only a chymist can recover it; sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words, that none but philosophers can distinguish it; and both may be so buried in impurities, as not to pay the cost of their extraction.

The diction, being the vehicle of the thoughts, first presents itself to the intellectual eye: and if the first appearance offends, a further knowledge is not often sought. Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing, must please at once. The pleasures of the mind imply something sudden and unexpected; that which elevates must always surprize. What is perceived by slow degrees may gratify us with consciousness

sciousness of improvement, but will never strike with the sense of pleasure.

Of all this, Cowley appears to have been without knowledge, or without care. He makes no selection of words, nor seeks any neatness of phrase: he has no elegance either lucky or elaborate; as his endeavours were rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy, he has few epithets, and those scattered without peculiar propriety of nice adaptation. It seems to follow from the necessity of the subject, rather than the care of the writer, that the diction of his heroick poem is less familiar than that of his flightest writings. He has given not the same numbers, but the same diction, to the gentle Anacreon and the tempestuous Pindar.

His versification seems to have had very little of his care; and if what he thinks be true, that his numbers are unmusical only when they are ill read, the art of reading them is at present lost; for they are commonly harsh to modern ears. He has indeed many noble lines, such as the feeble care of Waller never could produce. The bulk of his thoughts  
some-

sometimes swelled his verse to unexpected and inevitable grandeur; but his excellence of this kind is merely fortuitous: he sinks willingly down to his general carelessness, and avoids with very little care either meanness or asperity.

His contractions are often rugged and harsh:

One flings a mountain, and its rivers too  
Torn up with't.

His rhymes are very often made by pronouns or particles, or the like unimportant words, which disappoint the ear, and destroy the energy of the line.

His combinations of different measures is sometimes dissonant and unpleasing; he joins verses together, of which the former does not slide easily into the latter.

The words *do* and *did*, which so much degrade in present estimation the line that admits them, were in the time of Cowley little censured or avoided; how often he used them, and with how bad an effect, at least to our ears, will appear by a passage, in which every reader will lament to see just and noble thoughts defrauded of their praise by inelegance of language:

Where



Where honour or where conscience *does* not blind,  
No other law shall shackle me ;  
Slave to myself I ne'er will be ;  
Nor shall my future actions be confin'd  
By my own present mind.

Who by resolves and vows engag'd *does* stand  
For days, that yet belong to fate,  
*Does* like an unthrift mortgage his estate,  
Before it falls into his hand,

The bondman of the cloister so,  
All that he *does* receive *does* always owe.  
And still as Time comes in, it goes away,  
Not to enjoy, but debts to pay !

Unhappy slave, and pupil to a bell !  
Which his hour's work as well as hours *does* tell :  
Unhappy till the last, the kind releasing knell.

His heroick lines are often formed of monosyllables ; but yet they are sometimes sweet and sonorous.

He says of the Messiah,  
Round the whole earth his dreaded name shall  
found,  
*And reach to worlds that must not yet be found.*

In another place, of David,  
Yet bid him go securely, when he sends ;  
'Tis Saul that is his foe, and we his friends.

*The man who has his God, no aid can lack;  
And we who bid him go, will bring him back.*

Yet amidst his negligence he sometimes attempted an improved and scientific versification; of which it will be best to give his own account subjoined to this line,

Nor can the glory contain itself in th' endless space.

“ I am sorry that it is necessary to admonish  
“ the most part of readers, that it is not by  
“ negligence that this verse is so loose, long,  
“ and, as it were, vast; it is to paint in the  
“ number the nature of the thing which it describes,  
“ which I would have observed in divers other places of this poem, that else  
“ will pass for very careless verses: as before,  
*And over-runs the neighb'ring fields with violent course.*

“ In the second book;

*Down a precipice deep, down he casts them all.—*

“ — And,

*And fell a-down his shoulders with loose care.*

“ In the third,

*Brass was his helmet, his boots brass, and o'er  
His breast a thick plate of strong brass he wore.*

“ In

“ In the fourth,

*Like some fair pine o'er-looking all th' ignobler wood.*

“ And,

*Some from the rocks cast themselves down headlong,*

“ And many more: but it is enough to instance in a few. The thing is, that the disposition of words and numbers should be such, as that, out of the order and sound of them, the things themselves may be represented. This the Greeks were not so accurate as to bind themselves to; neither have our English poets observed it, for aught I can find. The Latins (*qui musas colunt severiores*) sometimes did it; and their prince, Virgil, always: in whom the examples are innumerable, and taken notice of by all judicious men, so that it is superfluous to collect them.”

I know not whether he has, in many of these instances, attained the representation or resemblance that he purposes. Verse can imitate only sound and motion. *A boundless* verse, a *headlong* verse, and a verse of *brass* or of *strong brass*, seem to comprise very incongruous





because he discovered that any staff was too lyrical for an heroick poem; but this seems to have been known before by *May* and *Sandys*, the translators of the *Pharfalia* and the *Metamorphoses*.

In the *Davideis* are some hemistichs, or verses left imperfect by the author, in imitation of *Virgil*, whom he supposes not to have intended to complete them: that this opinion is erroneous, may be probably concluded, because this truncation is imitated by no subsequent Roman poet; because *Virgil* himself filled up one broken line in the heat of recitation; because in one the sense is now unfinished; and because all that can be done by a broken verse, a line intersected by a *cæsura* and a full stop will equally effect.

Of triplets in his *Davideis* he makes no use, and perhaps did not at first think them allowable; but he appears afterwards to have changed his mind, for in the verses on the government of *Cromwell* he inserts them liberally with great happiness.

After so much criticism on his Poems, the Essays which accompany them must not be

forgotten. What is said by Sprat of his conversation, that no man could draw from it any suspicion of his excellence in poetry, may be applied to these compositions. No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural, and his style has a smooth and placid equability, which has never yet obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far-fought, or hard-laboured; but all is easy without feebleness, and familiar without grossness.

It has been observed by Felton, in his Essay on the Classics, that Cowley was beloved by every Muse that he courted; and that he has rivalled the Ancients in every kind of poetry but tragedy.

It may be affirmed, without any encomiastick fervour, that he brought to his poetick labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less; that he was equally qualified

fied for spritely fallies, and for lofty flights; that he was among those who freed translation from servility, and, instead of following his author at a distance, walked by his side; and that, if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise from time to time such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.

## D E N H A M.

**O**F Sir JOHN DENHAM very little is known but what is related of him by Wood, or by himself.

He was born at Dublin in 1615; the only son of Sir John Denham, of Little Horfely in Effex, then chief baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, and of Eleanor, daughter of Sir Garret More baron of Mellefont.

Two years afterwards, his father, being made one of the barons of the Exchequer in England, brought him away from his native country, and educated him in London.

In 1631 he was sent to Oxford, where he was considered “ as a dreaming young man, “ given more to dice and cards than study;” and therefore gave no prognosticks of his future eminence; nor was suspected to conceal,  
under



under sluggishness and laxity, a genius born to improve the literature of his country.

When he was, three years afterwards, removed to Lincoln's Inn, he prosecuted the common law with sufficient appearance of application; yet did not lose his propensity to cards and dice; but was very often plundered by gamesters.

Being severely reprov'd for this folly, he profess'd, and perhaps believ'd, himself re-claimed; and, to testify the sincerity of his repentance, wrote and published "An Essay upon Gaming."

He seems to have divided his studies between law and poetry; for, in 1636, he translated the second book of the *Æneid*.

Two years after, his father died; and then, notwithstanding his resolutions and professions, he returned again to the vice of gaming, and lost several thousand pounds that had been left him.

In 1642, he published "The Sophy." This seems to have given him his first hold of the publick attention; for Waller remarked, "that he broke out like the Irish rebellion three-score thousand strong when nobody was

“aware, or in the least suspected it:” an observation which could have had no propriety, had his poetical abilities been known before.

He was after that pricked for sheriff of Surrey, and made governor of Farnham Castle for the king; but he soon resigned that charge, and retreated to Oxford, where, in 1643, he published “Cooper’s Hill.”

This poem had such reputation as to excite the common artifice by which envy degrades excellence. A report was spread, that the performance was not his own, but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty pounds. The same attempt was made to rob Addison of his Cato, and Pope of his Essay on Criticism.

In 1647, the distresses of the royal family required him to engage in more dangerous employments. He was entrusted by the queen with a message to the king; and, by whatever means, so far softened the ferocity of Hugh Peters, that by his intercession admission was procured. Of the king’s condescension he has given an account in the dedication of his works.

He was afterwards employed in carrying on the king’s correspondence; and, as he says,  
dis-

discharged this office with great safety to the royalists: and being accidentally discovered by the adverse party's knowledge of Mr. Cowley's hand, he escaped happily both for himself and his friends.

He was yet engaged in a greater undertaking. In April 1648, he conveyed James the duke of York from London into France, and delivered him there to the Queen and prince of Wales. This year he published his translation of "Cato Major."

He now resided in France, as one of the followers of the exiled king; and, to divert the melancholy of their condition, was sometimes enjoined by his master to write occasional verses; one of which amusements was probably his ode or song upon the Embassy to Poland, by which he and lord Crofts procured a contribution of ten thousand pounds from the Scotch, that wandered over that kingdom. Poland was at that time very much frequented by itinerant traders, who, in a country of very little commerce and of great extent, where every man resided on his own estate, contributed very much to the accommodation of life, by bringing to every man's house those little necessities  
which

which it was very inconvenient to want, and very troublesome to fetch. I have formerly read, without much reflection, of the multitude of Scotchmen that travelled with their wares in Poland; and that their numbers were not small, the success of this negociation gives sufficient evidence.

About this time, what estate the war and the gamesters had left him was sold, by order of the parliament; and when, in 1652, he returned to England, he was entertained by the earl of Pembroke.

Of the next years of his life there is no account. At the Restoration he obtained that which many missed, the reward of his loyalty; being made surveyor of the king's buildings, and dignified with the order of the Bath. He seems now to have learned some attention to money; for Wood says, that he got by this place seven thousand pounds.

After the Restoration he wrote the poem on Prudence and Justice, and perhaps some of his other pieces: and as he appears, whenever any serious question comes before him, to have been a man of piety, he consecrated his poetical powers to religion, and made a metrical version



version of the psalms of David. In this attempt he has failed; but in sacred poetry who has succeeded?

It might be hoped that the favour of his master and esteem of the publick would now make him happy. But human felicity is short and uncertain; a second marriage brought upon him so much disquiet, as for a time disordered his understanding; and Butler lampooned him for his lunacy. I know not whether the malignant lines were then made publick, nor what provocation incited Butler to do that which no provocation can excuse.

His frenzy lasted not long\*; and he seems to have regained his full force of mind; for he wrote afterwards his excellent poem upon the death of Cowley, whom he was not long to survive; for on the 19th of March, 1668, he was buried by his side.

\* In Grammont's Memoirs many circumstances are related both of his marriage and his frenzy very little favourable to his character. E.

DENHAM is deservedly considered as one of the fathers of English poetry. "Denham and Waller," says Prior, "improved our versification, and Dryden perfected it." He has given specimens of various composition, descriptive, ludicrous, didactic, and sublime.

He appears to have had, in common with almost all mankind, the ambition of being upon proper occasions *a merry fellow*, and in common with most of them to have been by nature, or by early habits, debarred from it. Nothing is less exhilarating than the ludicrousness of Denham: He does not fail for want of efforts: he is familiar, he is gross; but he is never merry, unless the "Speech against peace in the close Committee" be excepted. For grave burlesque, however, his imitation of Davenant shews him to have been well qualified.

Of his more elevated occasional poems there is perhaps none that does not deserve commendation. In the verses to Fletcher, we have an image that has since been adopted:

"But whither am I stray'd? I need not raise

"Trophies to thee from other mens dispraise;

"Nor

“Nor is thy fame on lesser ruins built,  
“Nor need thy juster title the foul guilt  
“Of eastern kings, who, to secure their reign,  
“Must have their brothers, sons, and kindred  
“slain.”

After Denham, Orrery, in one of his prologues,

“Poets are sultans, if they had their will;  
“For every author would his brother kill.”

And Pope,

“Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,  
“Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne.”

But this is not the best of his little pieces: it is excelled by his poem to Fanshawe, and his elegy on Cowley.

His praise of Fanshawe's version of Guarini, contains a very spritely and judicious character of a good translator:

“That servile path thou nobly dost decline,  
“Of tracing word by word, and line by line.  
“Those are the labour'd births of slavish brains,  
“Not the effect of poetry, but pains;  
“Cheap vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords  
“No flight for thoughts, but poorly stick at words.

“A new

"A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,  
 "To make translations and translators too.  
 "They but preserve the ashes, thou the flame,  
 "True to his sense, but truer to his fame."

The excellence of these lines is greater, as the truth which they contain was not at that time generally known.

His poem on the death of Cowley was his last, and, among his shorter works, his best performance: the numbers are musical, and the thoughts are just.

"COOPER'S HILL" is the work that confers upon him the rank and dignity of an original author. He seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated *local poetry*, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental meditation.

To trace a new scheme of poetry has in itself a very high claim to praise, and its praise is yet more when it is apparently copied by  
 Garth



Garth and Pope\*; after whose names little will be gained by an enumeration of smaller poets, that have left scarce a corner of the island not dignified either by rhyme, or blank verse.

“COOPER’S HILL,” if it be maliciously inspected, will not be found without its faults. The digressions are too long, the morality too frequent, and the sentiments sometimes such as will not bear a rigorous enquiry.

The four verses, which, since Dryden has commended them, almost every writer for a century past has imitated, are generally known:

“O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream

“My great example, as it is my theme!

“Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet  
“not dull;

“Strong without rage, without o’er-flowing full.”

The lines are in themselves not perfect; for most of the words, thus artfully opposed, are to be understood simply on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other; and if there be any language which does not express intellectual operations by material

\* By Garth, in his “Poem on Claremont,” and by Pope, in his “Windfor Forest.” H.

images,

images, into that language they cannot be translated. But so much meaning is comprized in few words; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicaciously collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted; and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet; that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merit. It has beauty peculiar to itself, and must be numbered among those felicities which cannot be produced at will by wit and labour, but must arise unexpectedly in some hour propitious to poetry.

He appears to have been one of the first that understood the necessity of emancipating translation from the drudgery of counting lines and interpreting single words. How much this servile practice obscured the clearest and and deformed the most beautiful parts of the ancient authors, may be discovered by a perusal of our earlier versions; some of them the works of men well qualified, not only by critical knowledge, but by poetical genius, who yet, by a mistaken ambition of exactness, degraded

graded at once their originals and themselves.

Denham saw the better way, but has not pursued it with great success. His versions of Virgil are not pleasing; but they taught Dryden to please better. His poetical imitation of Tully on "Old Age" has neither the clearness of prose, nor the spriteliness of poetry.

The "strength of Denham," which Pope so emphatically mentions, is to be found in many lines and couplets, which convey much meaning in few words, and exhibit the sentiment with more weight than bulk.

#### On the Thames.

" Though with those streams he no resemblance  
 " hold,  
 " Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold;  
 " His genuine and less guilty wealth t' explore,  
 " Search not his bottom, but survey his shore."

#### On Strafford.

" His wisdom such, as once it did appear  
 " Three kingdoms wonder, and three kingdoms  
 " fear;

- “ While single he stood forth, and seem’d  
 “ although  
 “ Each had an army, as an equal foe.  
 “ Such was his force of eloquence, to make  
 “ The hearers more concern’d than he that spake;  
 “ Each seem’d to act that part he came to see,  
 “ And none was more a looker-on than he;  
 “ So did he move our passions, some were known  
 “ To wish, for the defence, the crime their own.  
 “ Now private pity strove with publick hate,  
 “ Reason with rage, and eloquence with fate.”

On Cowley.

- “ To him no author was unknown,  
 “ Yet what he wrote was all his own;  
 “ Horace’s wit, and Virgil’s state,  
 “ He did not steal, but emulate!  
 “ And when he would like them appear,  
 “ Their garb, but not their cloaths, did wear.”

As one of Denham’s principal claims to the regard of posterity arises from his improvement of our numbers, his versification ought to be considered. It will afford that pleasure which arises from the observation of a man of judgement naturally right forsaking bad copies by degrees, and advancing towards a better practice,



practice, as he gains more confidence in himself.

In his translation of Virgil, written when he was about twenty-one years old, may be still found the old manner of continuing the sense ungracefully from verse to verse.

“ Then all those

“ Who in the dark our fury did escape,

“ Returning, know our borrow'd arms, and

“ shape,

“ And differing dialect: then their numbers swell

“ And grow upon us; first Choræbeus fell

“ Before Minerva's altar: next did bleed

“ Just Ripheus, whom no Trojan did exceed

“ In virtue, yet the gods his fate decreed.

“ Then Hypanis and Dymas, wounded by

“ Their friends; nor thee, Pantheus, thy piety,

“ Nor consecrated mitre, from the same

“ Ill fate could save; my country's funeral flame

“ And Troy's cold ashes I attest, and call

“ To witness for myself, that in their fall

“ No foes, or death, nor danger I declin'd,

“ Did and deserv'd no less, my fate to find.”

From this kind of concatenated metre he afterwards refrained, and taught his followers the art of concluding their sense in couplets;

which has perhaps been with rather too much constancy pursued.

This passage exhibits one of those triplets which are not infrequent in this first essay, but which it is to be supposed his maturer judgement disapproved, since in his latter works he has totally forborn them.

His rhymes are such as seem found without difficulty, by following the sense; and are for the most part as exact at least as those of other poets, though now and then the reader is shifted off with what he can get.

“ O how *transform'd*!

“ How much unlike that Hector, who *return'd*

“ Clad in Achilles' spoils!

And again:

“ From thence a thousand lesser poets *sprung*

“ Like petty princes from the fall of *Rome*.”

Sometimes the weight of rhyme is laid upon a word too feeble to sustain it:

“ Troy confounded falls

“ From all her glories: if it might have stood

“ By any power, by this right hand it *shou'd*.

“ —And though my outward state misfortune *hath*

“ Deprest thus low, it cannot reach my faith.”

“ —Thus

“ — Thus by his fraud and our own faith o’er-  
“ come,

“ A feigned tear destroys us, against *whom*

“ Tydides nor Achilles could prevail,

“ Nor ten years conflict, nor a thousand fail.”

He is not very careful to vary the ends of his verses: in one passage the word *die* rhimes three couplets in fix.

Most of these petty faults are in his first productions, when he was less skilful, or at least less dexterous in the use of words; and though they had been more frequent they could only have lessened the grace, not the strength of his composition. He is one of the writers that improved our taste, and advanced our language, and whom we ought therefore to read with gratitude, though, having done much, he left much to do.

## M I L T O N.

THE Life of Milton has been already written in so many forms, and with such minute enquiry, that I might perhaps more properly have contented myself with the addition of a few notes to Mr. Fenton's elegant Abridgement, but that a new narrative was thought necessary to the uniformity of this edition.

JOHN MILTON was by birth a gentleman, descended from the proprietors of Milton near Thame in Oxfordshire, one of whom forfeited his estate in the times of York and Lancaster. Which side he took I know not; his descendant inherited no veneration for the White Rose.

His



His grandfather John was keeper of the forest of Shotover, a zealous papist, who disinherited his son, because he had forsaken the religion of his ancestors.

His father, John, who was the son disinherited, had recourse for his support to the profession of a scrivener. He was a man eminent for his skill in musick, many of his compositions being still to be found; and his reputation in his profession was such, that he grew rich, and retired to an estate. He had probably more than common literature, as his son addresses him in one of his most elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caston, a Welsh family, by whom he had two sons, John the poet, and Christopher who studied the law, and adhered, as the law taught him, to the King's party, for which he was awhile persecuted; but having, by his brother's interest, obtained permission to live in quiet, he supported himself so honourably by chamber-practice, that, soon after the accession of King James, he was knighted and made a Judge; but, his constitution being too weak for business, he retired before any disreputable compliances became necessary.

He had likewise a daughter Anne, whom he married with a considerable fortune to Edward Philips, who came from Shrewsbury, and rose in the Crown-office to be secondary: by him she had two sons, John and Edward, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentic account of his domestic manners.

John, the Poet, was born in his father's house, at the Spread-Eagle in Bread-street, Dec. 9, 1608, between six and seven in the morning. His father appears to have been very solicitous about his education; for he was instructed at first by private tuition under the care of Thomas Young, who was afterwards chaplain to the English merchants at Ham-burgh, and of whom we have reason to think well, since his scholar considered him as worthy of an epistolary Elegy.

He was then sent to St. Paul's School, under the care of Mr. Gill; and removed, in the beginning of his sixteenth year, to Christ's College in Cambridge, where he entered a fizar\*, Feb. 12, 1624.

He

\* In this assertion Dr. Johnson was mistaken. Milton was admitted

He was at this time eminently skilled in the Latin tongue; and he himself, by annexing the dates to his first compositions, a boast of which *Politian* had given him an example, seems to commend the earliness of his own proficiency to the notice of posterity. But the products of his vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an estimate: many have excelled Milton in their first essays, who never rose to works like *Paradise Lost*.

At fifteen, a date which he uses till he is sixteen, he translated or versified two Psalms, 114 and 136, which he thought worthy of the publick eye; but they raise no great expectations; they would in any numerous school have obtained praise, but not excited wonder.

Many of his elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors admitted a pensioner, and not a fizar, as will appear by the following extract from the College Register: "Johannes  
" Milton Londinensis, filius Johannis, institutus fuit in literarum Elementis sub Mag'ro Gill Gymnasii Paulini præfecto, admissus est *Pensionarius Minor* Feb. 12<sup>o</sup>, 1624, sub  
" M'ro Chappell, solvitq. pro Ingr. £. 0 10s. 0d." E.

with

with very nice discernment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classic elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few: Haddon and Ascham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they may have succeeded in prose, no sooner attempt verses than they provoke derision. If we produced any thing worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was perhaps *Alabaster's Roxana* \*.

Of these exercises which the rules of the University required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded; for they were such as few can perform: yet there is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness. That he obtained no fellowship is certain; but the unkindness with which he was treated was not merely negative. I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was one of the last students in either university that suffered the publick indignity of corporal correction.

\* Published 1632. E.



It was, in the violence of controversial hostility, objected to him, that he was expelled: this he steadily denies, and it was apparently not true; but it seems plain from his own verses to *Diodati*, that he had incurred *Rustication*; a temporary dismissal into the country, with perhaps the loss of a term.

Me tenet urbs reflua quam Thamesis alluit undâ,  
Meque nec invitum patria dulcis habet.

Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura revivere Camum,  
Nec dudum *vetiti* me *laris* angit amor.—

Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,  
Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.

Si sit hoc *exilium* patrias adiisse penates,  
Et vacuum curis otia grata sequi,

Non ego vel *profugi* nomen sortemve recuso,  
Lætus et *exilii* conditione fruor.

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindness and reverence can give to the term, *vetiti laris*, “a habitation from which he is excluded;” or how *exile* can be otherwise interpreted. He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring *the threats of a rigorous master, and something else, which a temper like his cannot undergo*. What was more than threat was probably punishment. This poem, which mentions

tions his *exile*, proves likewise that it was not perpetual; for it concludes with a resolution of returning some time to Cambridge. And it may be conjectured from the willingness with which he has perpetuated the memory of his exile, that its cause was such as gave him no shame.

He took both the usual degrees; that of Batchelor in 1628, and that of Master in 1632; but he left the university with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors, or his own captious perverseness. The cause cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His scheme of education, inscribed to *Hartlib*, supersedes all academical instruction, being intended to comprise the whole time which men usually spend in literature, from their entrance upon grammar, *till they proceed, as it is called, masters of arts*. And in his Discourse *on the likeliest Way to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, he ingenuously proposes, that *the profits of the lands forfeited by the act for superstitious uses, should be applied to such academies all over the land where languages and arts may be taught together; so that youth may be at once*  
brought

*brought up, to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means such of them as had the gift, being enabled to support themselves (without tithes) by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers.*

One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men designed for orders in the Church were permitted to act plays, *writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trincalos\*, buffoons and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had, or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court-ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles.*

This is sufficiently peevish in a man, who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates, with great luxuriance, the compensation which the pleasures of the theatre afford him. Plays were therefore only criminal when they were acted by academicks.

\* By the mention of this name he evidently refers to Albu-mazar, acted at Cambridge in 1614. Ignoramus and other plays were performed at the same time. The practice was then very frequent. The last dramattick performance at either university was *The Grateful Fair*, written by Christopher Smart, and represented at Pembroke College, Cambridge, about 1747. E.

He went to the university with a design of entering into the church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared, that whoever became a clergyman must “subscribe slave, and  
“take an oath withal, which, unless he took  
“with a conscience that could not retch, he  
“must straight perjure himself. He thought  
“it better to prefer a blameless silence before  
“the office of speaking, bought and begun  
“with servitude and forswearing.”

These expressions are, I find, applied to the subscription of the Articles; but it seems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the Articles which seem to thwart his opinions: but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation.

His unwillingness to engage in the ministry, perhaps not yet advanced to a settled resolution of declining it, appears in a letter to one of his friends, who had reproved his suspended and dilatory life, which he seems to have imputed to an insatiable curiosity, and fantastick luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plausible answer, in which he endeavours to persuade him that the delay  
proceeds



proceeds not from the delights of desultory study, but from the desire of obtaining more fitness for his task; and that he goes on, *not taking thought of being late, so it give advantage to be more fit.*

When he left the university, he returned to his father, then residing at Horton in Buckinghamshire, with whom he lived five years; in which time he is said to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this universality is to be understood, who shall inform us?

It might be supposed, that he who read so much should have done nothing else; but Milton found time to write the Masque of *Comus*, which was presented at Ludlow, then the residence of the Lord President of Wales, in 1634; and had the honour of being acted by the Earl of Bridgewater's sons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's *Circe* \*; but

\* It has nevertheless its foundation in reality. The earl of Bridgewater being president of Wales in the year 1634, had his residence at Ludlow-castle in Shropshire, at which time lord Brackly and Mr. Egerton his sons, and lady Alice Egerton his daughter, passing through a place called the Hay-wood forest, or Haywood in Herefordshire, were benighted, and the lady

but we never can refuse to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer :

———— a quo ceu fonte perenni  
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.

His next production was *Lycidas*, an elegy, written in 1637, on the death of Mr. King, the son of Sir John King, secretary for Ire-

land for a short time lost : this accident being related to their father upon their arrival at his castle, Milton, at the request of his friend Henry Lawes, who taught music in the family, wrote this masque. Lawes set it to music, and it was acted on Michaelmas night ; the two brothers, the young lady, and Lawes himself, bearing each a part in the representation.

The lady Alice Egerton became afterwards the wife of the earl of Carbury, who at his seat called Golden-grove, in Caermarthenshire, harbored Dr. Jeremy Taylor in the time of the Usurpation. Among the doctor's sermons is one on her death, in which her character is finely pourtrayed. Her sister, lady Mary, was given in marriage to lord Herbert of Cherbury.

Notwithstanding Dr. Johnson's assertion, that the fiction is derived from Homer's Circe, it may be conjectured, that it was rather taken from the *Comus* of Erycius Puteanus, in which, under the fiction of a dream, the characters of Comus and his attendants are delineated, and the delights of sensualists exposed and reprobated. This little tract was published at Louvain in 1611. and afterwards at Oxford in 1634, the very year in which Milton's *Comus* was written. H.

Milton evidently was indebted to the *Old Wives Tale* of George Peele for the plan of *Comus*. E.

land.

land in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined to do honour to his memory. Milton's acquaintance with the Italian writers may be discovered by a mixture of longer and shorter verses, according to the rules of Tuscan poetry, and his malignity to the Church by some lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is supposed about this time to have written his *Arcades*; for while he lived at Horton he used sometimes to steal from his studies a few days, which he spent at Harefield, the house of the countess dowager of Derby, where the *Arcades* made part of a dramattick entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country: and had some purpose of taking chambers in the Inns of Court, when the death of his mother set him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's consent, and Sir Henry Wotton's directions, with the celebrated precept of prudence, *i pensieri stretti, ed il viso sciolto*; "thoughts close, and looks loose."

In 1638 he left England, and went first to Paris; where, by the favour of Lord *Scudamore*, he had the opportunity of visiting *Grotius*, then residing at the French court as ambassador from Christina of Sweden. From Paris he hastened into Italy, of which he had with particular diligence studied the language and literature: and though he seems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, staid two months at Florence; where he found his way into the academies, and produced his compositions with such applause as appears to have exalted him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope, that, “by labour and intense study, which,” says he, “I take to be my portion in this life, “joined with a strong propensity of nature,” he might “leave something so written to after-times, as they should not willingly let it “die.”

It appears, in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal; as he  
set



set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservation from oblivion.

At Florence he could not indeed complain that his merit wanted distinction. Carlo Dati presented him with an encomiastic inscription, in the tumid lapidary style; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the first stanza is only empty noise; the rest are perhaps too diffuse on common topics: but the last is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindness by the Learned and the Great. Holstenius, the keeper of the Vatican Library, who had resided three years at Oxford, introduced him to Cardinal Barberini: and he, at a musical entertainment, waited for him at the door, and led him by the hand into the assembly. Here Selvaggi praised him in a distich, and Salfilli in a tetrastick: neither of them of much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce; for the encomiums with which Milton repaid Salfilli, though not secure against a stern grammarian, turn the balance indisputably in Milton's favour.

Of these Italian testimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publish them before his poems; though he says, he cannot be suspected but to have known that they were said *non tam de se, quam supra se*.

At Rome, as at Florence, he staid only two months; a time indeed sufficient, if he desired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures; but certainly too short for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

From Rome he passed on to Naples, in company of a hermit; a companion from whom little could be expected, yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Manfo marquis of Villa, who had been before the patron of Tasso. Manfo was enough delighted with his accomplishments to honour him with a sorry distich, in which he commends him for every thing but his religion; and Milton, in return, addressed him in a Latin poem, which must have raised an high opinion of English elegance and literature.

His purpose was now to have visited Sicily and Greece; but, hearing of the differences between the king and parliament, he thought  
it

it proper to hasten home, rather than pass his life in foreign amusements while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He therefore came back to Rome, though the merchants informed him of plots laid against him by the Jesuits, for the liberty of his conversations on religion. He had sense enough to judge that there was no danger, and therefore kept on his way, and acted as before, neither obtruding nor shunning controversy. He had perhaps given some offence by visiting Galileo, then a prisoner in the inquisition for philosophical heresy; and at Naples he was told by Manso, that, by his declarations on religious questions, he had excluded himself from some distinctions which he should otherwise have paid him. But such conduct, though it did not please, was yet sufficiently safe, and Milton staid two months more at Rome, and went on to Florence without molestation.

From Florence he visited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and having sent away a collection of music and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he probably considered as the metropolis of orthodoxy.

Here he reposed, as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Diodati and Frederick Spanheim, two learned professors of Divinity. From Geneva he passed through France; and came home, after an absence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Diodati; a man whom it is reasonable to suppose of great merit, since he was thought by Milton worthy of a poem, intitled, *Epitaphium Damonis*, written with the common but childish imitation of pastoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Ruffel, a taylor in St. Bride's Church-yard, and undertook the education of John and Edward Philips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took a house and garden in Aldersgate-street\*, which was not then so much

\* This is inaccurately expressed: Philips, and Dr. Newton after him, say a garden house, i. e. a house situate in a garden, and of which there were especially in the north suburbs of London very many, if not few else. The term is technical, and frequently occurs in the Athen. and East. Oxon. The meaning thereof may be collected from the article Thomas Farnabe,



much out of the world as it is now ; and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and instructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance, on the man who hastens home, because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a school-master ; but, since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue ; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse

Farnabe, the famous schoolmaster, of whom the author says, that he taught in Goldsmith's Rents, in Cripplegate parish, behind Redcross-street, where were large gardens and handsome houses. Milton's house in Jewin-street was also a garden-house, as were indeed most of his dwellings after his settlement in London. H.

an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive; his allowance was not ample; and he supplied its deficiencies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable list is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate-street, by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories should consider that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of his horse. Every man, that has ever undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of Schools, by reading those authors that treat of physical subjects; such as the Georgick, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement

ment which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embellishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary College.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and Justice are virtues and excellences of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one man may know another half his life without being able to estimate his skill

skill in hydrostaticks or astronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.

Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantick or paradoxical; for if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think, that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.

Ὅτι τοι ἐν μεγάροις κακόντ' ἀγαθόντε τέτυκται.

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy, I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very  
emi-



eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe, is a small History of Poetry, written in Latin by his nephew Philips, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard \*.

That in his school, as in every thing else which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation. He was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology; of which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then fashionable in Dutch universities.

He set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.

He now began to engage in the controversies of the times, and lent his breath to blow the

\* "We may be sure at least, that Dr. Johnson had never seen the book he speaks of; for it is entirely composed in English, though its title begins with two Latin words, 'Theatrum Poetarum; or A complete Collection of the Poets,' &c. a circumstance that probably misled the biographer of Milton." *European Magazine*, June, 1787. p. 388. E.

flames of contention. In 1641 he published a treatise of *Reformation*, in two books, against the established Church; being willing to help the Puritans, who were, he says, *inferior to the Prelates in learning*.

Hall, bishop of Norwich, had published an *Humble Remonstrance*, in defence of Episcopacy; to which, in 1641, six ministers\*, of whose names the first letters made the celebrated word *Smectymnuus*, gave their Answer. Of this Answer a Confutation was attempted by the learned *Usher*; and to the Confutation Milton published a Reply, intituled, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical Times, by virtue of those testimonies which are alledged to that purpose in some late treatises, one whereof goes under the name of James Lord Bishop of Armagh*.

I have transcribed this title to shew, by his contemptuous mention of *Usher*, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners. His next work was, *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy, by Mr. John Milton*,

\* Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, William Spinstow. E.

1642. In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers; and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is  
"not to be obtained but by devout prayer to  
"that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all  
"utterance and knowledge, and sends out his  
"Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar,  
"to touch and purify the lips of whom he  
"pleases. To this must be added, industrious  
"and select reading, steady observation, and  
"insight into all seemly and generous arts and  
"affairs; till which in some measure be com-  
"past, I refuse not to sustain this expecta-  
"tion." From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the *Paradise Lost*.

He published the same year two more pamphlets, upon the same question. To one of his antagonists, who affirms that he was *vomited out of the university*, he answers, in general terms;  
"The Fellows of the College wherein I spent  
"some years, at my parting, after I had taken  
"two degrees, as the manner is, signified ma-  
"ny

"ny times how much better it would content  
 "that I should stay.—As for the common ap-  
 "probation or dislike of that place, as now it  
 "is, that I should esteem or disesteem myself  
 "the more for that, too simple is the answer.  
 "er, if he think to obtain with me. Of small  
 "practice were the physician who could not  
 "judge, by what she and her sister have of  
 "long time vomited, that the worser stuff she  
 "strongly keeps in her stomach, but the better  
 "she is ever kecking at, and is queasy; she vo-  
 "mits now out of sickness; but before it will  
 "be well with her, she must vomit with strong  
 "phyick. The university, in the time of her  
 "better health, and my younger judgement,  
 "I never greatly admired, but now much  
 "less."

This is surely the language of a man who  
 thinks that he has been injured. He proceeds  
 to describe the course of his conduct, and the  
 train of his thoughts; and, because he has been  
 suspected of incontinence, gives an account of  
 his own purity: "That if I be justly charged,"  
 says he, "with this crime, it may come upon  
 "me with tenfold shame."

The



The style of his piece is rough, and such perhaps was that of his antagonist. This roughness he justifies, by great examples in a long digression. Sometimes he tries to be humorous: "Lest I should take him for some  
 "chaplain in hand, some squire of the body  
 "to his prelate, one who serves not at the altar only but at the Court-cupboard, he will  
 "bestow on us a pretty model of himself; and  
 "sets me out half a dozen pifical mottoes,  
 "wherever he had them, hopping short in the  
 "measure of convulsion fits; in which labour  
 "the agony of his wit having escaped narrowly,  
 "instead of well sized periods, he greets us  
 "with a quantity of thumb-ring posies.—And  
 "thus ends this section, or rather dissection of  
 "himself." Such is the controversial merri-  
 ment of Milton; his gloomy seriousness is yet  
 more offensive. Such is his malignity, *that*  
*hell grows darker at his frown.*

His father, after Reading was taken by *Essex*, came to reside in his house; and his school increased. At Whitsuntide, in his thirty-fifth year, he married Mary, the daughter of Mr. Powel, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire. He brought her to town with him, and expected

ed all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study; for, as Philips relates, “having for a month led a philosophic life, after having been used at home to a great house, and much company and joviality, her friends, possibly by her own desire, made earnest suit to have her company the remaining part of the summer; which was granted, upon a promise of her return at Michaelmas.”

Milton was too busy to much miss his wife: he pursued his studies; and now and then visited the Lady Margaret Leigh, whom he has mentioned in one of his sonnets. At last Michaelmas arrived; but the Lady had no inclination to return to the fullen gloom of her husband's habitation, and therefore very willingly forgot her promise. He sent her a letter, but had no answer; he sent more with the same success. It could be alledged that letters miscarry; he therefore dispatched a messenger, being by this time too angry to go himself. His messenger was sent back with some contempt. The family of the Lady were Cavaliers.

In

In a man whose opinion of his own merit was like Milton's, less provocation than this might have raised violent resentment. Milton soon determined to repudiate her for disobedience; and, being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify inclination, published (in 1644) *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; which was followed by *The Judgement of Martin Bucer, concerning Divorce*; and the next year, his Tetrachordon, *Expositions upon the four chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marriage*.

This innovation was opposed, as might be expected, by the clergy, who, then holding their famous assembly at Westminster, procured that the author should be called before the Lords; "but that House," says Wood, "whether approving the doctrine, or not favouring his accusers, did soon dismiss him."

There seems not to have been much written against him, nor any thing by any writer of eminence. The antagonist that appeared is styled by him, *a Serving Man turned Solicitor*. *Howel* in his letters mentions the new doctrine with contempt; and it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than of confutation.

He complains of this neglect in two sonnets, of which the first is contemptible, and the second not excellent.

From this time it is observed that he became an enemy to the Presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour, is nor more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest; he loves himself rather than truth.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unresisting sufferer of injuries; and perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice, by courting a young woman of great accomplishments, the daughter of one Doctor Davis, who was however not ready to comply, they resolved to endeavour a re-union. He went sometimes to the house of one Blackborough his relation, in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand, and at one of his usual visits was surpris'd to see his wife come from another room, and implore forgiveness on her knees. He resisted her intreaties for a while: "but partly," says Philips, "his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger or revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends

" on



“on both sides, soon brought him to an act  
“of oblivion and a firm league of peace.” It  
were injurious to omit, that Milton afterwards  
received her father and her brothers in his own  
house, when they were distressed, with other  
Royalists.

He published about the same time his *Areopagitica*, a *Speech of Mr. John Milton for the liberty of unlicensed Printing*. The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of Government, which human understanding seems hitherto unable to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every sceptick in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent, the publication of opinions, which that society shall think pernicious; but this punishment, though it

may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained, because writers may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted, because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestic, poetry was never long out of his thoughts.

About this time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, with some others, were first published.

He had taken a larger house in Barbican for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for a while, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away; "and the house again," says Philips, "now  
"looked like a house of the Muses only,  
"though the accession of scholars was not  
"great. Possibly his having proceeded so far  
"in the education of youth, may have been  
"the occasion of his adversaries calling him  
"pedagogue and school-master; whereas it is  
"well known he never set up for a publick  
"school,

“ school, to teach all the young fry of a parish ;  
“ but only was willing to impart his learning  
“ and knowledge to his relations, and the sons  
“ of gentlemen who were his intimate friends ,  
“ and that neither his writings nor his way of  
“ teaching favoured in the least of pedantry.”

Thus laboriously does his nephew extenuate what cannot be denied, and what might be confessed without disgrace. Milton was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment. This, however, his warmest friends seem not to have found ; they therefore shift and palliate. He did not sell literature to all comers at an open shop ; he was a chamber-milliner, and measured his commodities to his friends.

- Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him in this state of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued ; and, to raise his character again, has a mind to invest him with military splendour : “ He is much mistaken,” he says, “ if there was not about this time a design of making him an adjutant-general in Sir William Waller’s army. But the new-modeling of the army proved an obstruction to the design.” An event cannot be set at a

much greater distance than by having been only *designed, about some time*, if a man *be not much mistaken*. Milton shall be a pedagogue no longer; for, if Philips be not much mistaken, somebody at some time designed him for a soldier.

About the time that the army was new-modelled (1645) he removed to a smaller house in Holbourn, which opened backward into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. He is not known to have published any thing afterwards till the King's death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the Presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and *to compose the minds of the people*.

He made some *Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels*. While he contented himself to write, he perhaps did only what his conscience dictated; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his own passions, and the gradual prevalence of opinions, first willingly admitted and then habitually indulged; if objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and desire superinduced conviction; he yet shared only the common weakness of mankind, and might be no less sincere than his opponents

But



But as faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him, Milton is suspected of having interpolated the book called *Icon Basilike*, which the Council of State, to whom he was now made Latin secretary, employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken from *Sidney's Arcadia*, and imputing it to the King; whom he charges, in his *Iconoclastes*, with the use of this prayer, as with a heavy crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great: “ Who would have imagined so little fear in  
“ him of the true all-seeing Deity—as, imme-  
“ diately before his death, to pop into the  
“ hands of the grave bishop that attended him,  
“ as a special relique of his faintly exercises, a  
“ prayer stolen word for word from the mouth  
“ of a heathen woman praying to a heathen  
“ god?”

The papers which the King gave to Dr. Juxon on the scaffold, the regicides took away, so that they were at least the publishers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who had examined the question with great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The use of it by adaptation

was innocent; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse.

King Charles the Second, being now sheltered in Holland, employed Salmasius, professor of Polite Learning at Leyden, to write a defence of his father and of monarchy; and, to excite his industry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred Jacobuses. Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having, by excessive praises, been confirmed in great confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published *Defensio Regis*.

To this Milton was required to write a sufficient answer; which he performed (1651) in such a manner, that Hobbes declared himself unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst. In my opinion, Milton's periods are smoother, neater, and more pointed; but he delights himself with  
teazing

teazing his adversary as much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of Salmafius, whose doctrine he confiders as fervile and unmanly, to the ftream of *Salmacis*, which whoever entered left half his virility behind him. Salmafius was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a scold. *Tu es Gallus*, fays Milton, &, *ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus*. But his fupreme pleafure is to tax his adverfary, fo renowned for criticifm, with vitious Latin. He opens his book with telling that he has ufed *Persona*, which, according to Milton, fignifies only a *Mask*, in a fenfe not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *Person*. But as Nemefis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a folecifm by an expreffion in itfelf grofly foleciftical, when for one of thofe fupposed blunders, he fays, as *Ker*, and I think fome one before him, has remarked, *propino te grammatiflis tuis vapulandum*. From *vapulo*, which has a paffive fenfe, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations, and of kings, fink into queftions of grammar, if grammarians difcufs them.

Mil-

Milton, when he undertook this answer, was weak of body and dim of sight; but his will was forward, and what was wanting of health was supplied by zeal. He was rewarded with a thousand pounds, and his book was much read; for paradox, recommended by spirit and elegance, easily gains attention; and he who told every man that he was equal to his King, could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmasius was not dispersed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerness, is very credible. He taught only the stale doctrine of authority, and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch but the tyrant of literature, that almost all mankind were delighted to find him defied and insulted by a new name, not yet considered as any one's rival. If Christina, as is said, commended the *Defence of the People*, her purpose must be to torment Salmasius, who was then at her Court; for neither her civil station nor her natural character could dispose them to favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen, and by temper despotick.

That



That Salmasius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man so long accustomed to admiration, a little praise of his antagonist would be sufficiently offensive, and might incline him to leave Sweden, from which, however, he was dismissed, not with any mark of contempt, but with a train of attendance scarce less than regal.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was published by his son in the year of the Restoration. In the beginning, being probably most in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his use of the word *persona*; but, if I remember right, he misses a better authority than any that he has found, that of Juvenal in his fourth satire:

—Quid agis cum dira & fœdior omni  
Crimine *persona* est?

As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened Salmasius's life, and both perhaps with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the Spa, Sept. 3, 1653; and, as controvertists are commonly

monly said to be killed by their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him.

Cromwell had now dismissed the parliament by the authority of which he had destroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himself, under the title of protector, but with kingly and more than kingly power. That his authority was lawful, never was pretended; he himself founded his right only in necessity; but Milton, having now tasted the honey of publick employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy, but, continuing to exercise his office under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which to him seemed unlawful, should now sell his services, and his flatteries, to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such, that he was not disabled to discharge his office of Latin secretary, or continue his controversies. His mind was  
too

too eager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued.

About this time his first wife died in child-bed, having left him three daughters. As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her; but after a short time married Catherine, the daughter of one captain Woodcock of Hackney; a woman doubtless educated in opinions like his own. She died within a year, of childbirth, or some distemper that followed it; and her husband honoured her memory with a poor sonnet.

The first Reply to Milton's *Defensio Populi* was published in 1651, called *Apologia pro Rege & Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici (alias Miltoni) defensionem destructivam Regis & Populi*. Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew Philips, under whose name he published an answer so much corrected by him, that it might be called his own, imputed it to Bramhal; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themselves at liberty to treat him as if they had known what they only suspected.

Next

Next year appeared *Regii Sanguinis clamor ad Cœlum*. Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus, or More, a French minister, having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton in his *Defensio Secunda*, and overwhelmed by such violence of invective, that he began to shrink under the tempest, and gave his persecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger; but Milton's pride operated against his malignity; and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin should escape than that he should be convicted of mistake.

In this second Defence he shews that his eloquence is not merely satirical; the rudeness of his invective is equalled by the grossness of his flattery. “Deferimur, Cromuelle, tu solus superes, ad te summa nostrarum rerum rediit, in te solo consistit, insuperabili tuæ virtuti cedimus cuncti, nemine vel obloquente, nisi qui æquales inæqualis ipse honores sibi quærit, aut digniori concessos invidet, aut non intelligit nihil esse in societate hominum magis vel Deo gratum, vel rationi

“ con-



“ consentaneum, esse in civitate nihil æquius,  
 “ utilius, quam potiri rerum dignissimum.  
 “ Eum te agnoscunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu  
 “ civis maximus & \* gloriosissimus, dux pub-  
 “ lici consilii, exercitum fortissimorum impe-  
 “ rator, pater patriæ gessisti. Sic tu spontanea  
 “ bonorum omnium & animitus missa voce fa-  
 “ lutaris.”

Cæsar, when he assumed the perpetual dictatorship, had not more servile or more elegant flattery. A translation may shew its servility; but its elegance is less attainable. Having exposed the unskilfulness or selfishness of the former government, “ We were left,” says Milton, “ to ourselves: the whole national interest fell into your hands, and subsists only in your abilities. To your virtue, overpowering and resistless, every man gives way, except some who, without equal qualifications, aspire to equal honours, who envy the distinctions of merit greater than their own, or who have yet to learn, that in the coalition of human society nothing is more pleas-

\* It may be doubted whether *gloriosissimus* be here used with Milton's boasted purity. *Res gloriosa* is an *illustrious thing*; but *vir gloriosus* is commonly a *braggart*, as in *miles gloriosus*. Dr. J.

“ing to God, or more agreeable to reason,  
 “than that the highest mind should have the  
 “sovereign power. Such, Sir, are you by  
 “general confession; such are the things at-  
 “chieved by you, the greatest and most glo-  
 “rious of our countrymen, the director of  
 “our publick councils, the leader of uncon-  
 “quered armies, the father of your country;  
 “for by that title does every good man hail  
 “you, with sincere and voluntary praise.”

Next year, having defended all that wanted  
 defence, he found leisure to defend himself.  
 He undertook his own vindication against  
 More, whom he declares in his title to be just-  
 ly called the author of the *Regii Sanguinis cla-*  
*mor*. In this there is no want of vehemence  
 or eloquence, nor does he forget his wonted  
 wit. “Morus es? an Momus? an uterque  
 “idem est?” He then remembers that *Morus*  
 is Latin for a Mulberry-tree, and hints at the  
 known transformation:

—Poma alba ferebat  
 Quæ post nigra tulit Morus.

With this piece ended his controversies: and  
 he from this time gave himself up to his pri-  
 vate studies and his civil employment.

As

As secretary to the Protector he is supposed to have written the Declaration of the reasons for a war with Spain. His agency was considered as of great importance; for when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publicly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder, that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.

Being now forty-seven years old, and seeing himself disencumbered from external interruptions, he seems to have recollected his former purposes, and to have resumed three great works which he had planned for his future employment: an epick poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To collect a dictionary, seems a work of all others least practicable in a state of blindness, because it depends upon perpetual and minute inspection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it, after he had lost his eyes; but having had it always before him, he continued it, says Philips, *almost to his dying-day; but the papers were so discomposed and deficient, that they could not be fitted for the press.* The

compilers of the Latin dictionary, printed at Cambridge, had the use of those collections in three folios; but what was their fate afterwards is not known\*.

To compile a history from various authors, when they can only be consulted by other eyes, is not easy, nor possible, but with more skilful and attentive help than can be commonly obtained; and it was probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing, that stopped Milton's narrative at the Conquest; a period at which

\* The Cambridge Dictionary, published in 4to 1693, is no other than a copy, with some small additions, of that of Dr. Adam Littleton in 1685, by fundry persons, of whom, though their names are concealed, there is great reason to conjecture that Milton's nephew, Edward Philips, is one; for it is expressly said by Wood, Fasti, vol. I. p. 266, that Milton's "Thesaurus" came to his hands, and it is asserted in the preface thereto, that the editors thereof had the use of three large folios in manuscript, collected and digested into alphabetical order by Mr. John Milton.

It has been remarked, that the additions, together with the preface abovementioned, and a large part of the title of the "Cambridge Dictionary," have been incorporated and printed with the subsequent editions of "Littleton's Dictionary," till that of 1735. Vid. Biogr. Brit. 2985, in not. So that for aught that appears to the contrary, Philips was the last possessor of Milton's MS. H.



affairs were not yet very intricate, nor authors very numerous.

For the subject of his epick poem, after much deliberation, *long chusing, and beginning late*, he fixed upon *Paradise Lost*; a design so comprehensive, that it could be justified only by success. He had once designed to celebrate King Arthur, as he hints in his verses to Manus, but *Arthur was reserved*, says Fenton, *to another destiny*\*.

It appears, by some sketches of poetical projects left in manuscript, and to be seen in a library † at Cambridge, that he had digested his thoughts on this subject into one of those wild dramas which were anciently called Mysteries; and Philips had seen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the Sun. These mysteries consist of allegorical persons; such as *Justice, Mercy, Faith*. Of the tragedy or mystery of *Paradise Lost* there are two plans:

\* Id est, to be the subject of an heroic poem, written by Sir Richard Blackmore. H.

† Trinity College. E,

## The Persons.

Michael.  
 Chorus of Angels.  
 Heavenly Love.  
 Lucifer.  
 Adam, } with the  
 Eve, } Serpent.  
 Conscience.  
 Death.  
 Labour, }  
 Sicknefs, }  
 Difcontent, } Mutes.  
 Ignorance, }  
 with others; }  
 Faith.  
 Hope.  
 Charity.

## The Persons.

Mofes.  
 Divine Justice, Wif-  
 dom, Heavenly Love.  
 The Evening Star, Hef-  
 perus.  
 Chorus of Angels.  
 Lucifer.  
 Adam.  
 Eve.  
 Conscience.  
 Labour, }  
 Sicknefs, }  
 Difcontent, } Mutes.  
 Ignorance, }  
 Fear, }  
 Death; }  
 Faith  
 Hope.  
 Charity.

*Paradise Lost.*

## The Persons.

Mofes, *προλογίζεαι*, recounting how he af-  
 fumed his true body; that it corrupts not, be-  
 caufe

cause it is with God in the mount; declares the like with Enoch and Elijah; besides the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews, and clouds, preserve it from corruption; whence exhorts to the sight of God; tells they cannot see Adam in the state of innocence, by reason of their sin.

Justice, } debating what should become of  
 Mercy, } man, if he fall.  
 Wisdom, }

Chorus of Angels singing a hymn of the Creation.

## A C T II.

Heavenly Love.

Evening Star.

Chorus sing the marriage-song, and describe Paradise.

## A C T III.

Lucifer contriving Adam's ruin.

Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

## A C T IV.

Adam, }  
 Eve, } fallen.

Conscience cites them to God's examination.

Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has  
lost.

### A C T V.

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.

————— presented by an angel with  
Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, }  
Famine, Pestilence, Sicknefs, Dif- } Mutes.  
content, Ignorance, Fear, Death, }

To whom he gives their names. Likewise  
Winter, Heat, Tempest, &c.

Faith, }  
Hope, } comfort him and instruct him.  
Charity, }

Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his first design, which could have  
produced only an allegory, or mystery. The  
following sketch seems to have attained more  
maturity :

#### Adam unparadised :

The angel Gabriel, either descending or en-  
tering; shewing, since this globe was created,  
his frequency as much on earth as in heaven;  
describes Paradise. Next, the Chorus, shew-  
ing



ing the reason of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God ; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man ; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this Lucifer appears ; after his overthrow bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs : whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victory in heaven, against him and his accomplices : as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and insulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time been seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience, in a shape, accuses him ; Justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the meanwhile, the Chorus entertains the stage, and is

informed by some angel the manner of the Fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another; but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonishes Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but before causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs; at last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught.

These are very imperfect rudiments of *Paradise Lost*; but it is pleasant to see great works in their seminal state, pregnant with latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced

vanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation.

Invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct, and therefore he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be necessarily previous to poetical excellence; he had made himself acquainted with *seemly arts and affairs*; his comprehension was extended by various knowledge, and his memory stored with intellectual treasures. He was skilful in many languages, and had by reading and composition attained the full mastery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he retained the power of perusing them.

But while his greater designs were advancing, having now, like many other authors, caught the love of publication, he amused himself, as he could, with little productions. He sent to the press (1658) a manuscript of Raleigh, called the *Cabinet Council*; and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy, by a *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases, and the Means of removing Hirelings out of the Church*.

Oliver

Oliver was now dead; Richard was constrained to resign: the system of extemporary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments when that force was taken away; and Milton saw himself and his cause in equal danger. But he had still hope of doing something. He wrote letters, which Toland has published, to such men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth; and even in the year of the Restoration he *bated no jot of heart or hope*, but was fantastical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be settled by a pamphlet, called *A ready and easy way to establish a Free Commonwealth*; which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the commonwealthmen was very remarkable. When the King was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the Restoration, *Notes upon*  
a ser-



a sermon preached by one Griffiths, intituled, *The Fear of God and the King*. To these notes an answer was written by L'Estrange, in a pamphlet petulantly called *No Blind Guides*.

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the King was now about to be restored with the irresistible approbation of the people. He was therefore no longer secretary, and was consequently obliged to quit the house which he held by his office; and proportioning his sense of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient to seek some shelter, and hid himself for a time in Bartholomew-Close, by West Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.

The King, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs: and promised to admit into the Act of Oblivion all, except those whom the  
par-

parliament should except; and the parliament doomed none to capital punishment but the wretches who had immediately co-operated in the murder of the King. Milton was certainly not one of them; he had only justified what they had done.

This justification was indeed sufficiently offensive; and (June 16) an order was issued to seize Milton's *Defence*, and Goodwin's *Obstructors of Justice*, another book of the same tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to prosecute the authors; but Milton was not seized, nor perhaps very diligently pursued.

Not long after (August 19) the flutter of innumerable bosoms was stilled by an act, which the King, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an *act of oblivion* than of grace. Goodwin was named, with nineteen more, as incapacitated for any publick trust; but of Milton there was no exception.

Of this tendernefs shewn to Milton, the curiosity of mankind has not forborn to enquire the reason. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another instance which may confirm  
Dal-

Dalrymple's observation, who says, "that  
" whenever Burnet's narrations are examined,  
" he appears to be mistaken."

Forgotten he was not; for his prosecution was ordered; it must be therefore by design that he was included in the general oblivion. He is said to have had friends in the house, such as Marvel, Morrice, and Sir Thomas Clarges; and undoubtedly a man like him must have had influence. A very particular story of his escape is told by Richardson in his Memoirs, which he received from Pope, as delivered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant. In the war between the King and Parliament, Davenant was made prisoner and condemned to die; but was spared at the request of Milton. When the turn of success brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repaid the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generosity and gratitude so pleasing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain from his own relation; but of his escape there is no account. Betterton's narration can be traced no higher; it is not known that he had  
it

it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for life; but it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger. Goodwin, who had committed the same kind of crime, escaped with incapacitation; and as exclusion from publick trust is a punishment which the power of government can commonly inflict without the help of a particular law, it required no great interest to exempt Milton from a censure little more than verbal. Something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion; to veneration of his abilities, and compassion for his distresses, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was now poor and blind; and who would pursue with violence an illustrious enemy, depressed by fortune, and disarmed by nature\*?

\* A different account of the means by which Milton secured himself is given by an historian lately brought to light. "Milton, Latin secretary to Cromwell, distinguished by his writings in favour of the rights and liberties of the people, pretended to be dead, and had a publick funeral procession. The King applauded his policy in escaping the punishment of death, by a seasonable shew of dying." *Cunningham's History of Great Britain*, Vol. I. p. 14. E.



The publication of the act of oblivion put him in the same condition with his fellow-subjects. He was, however, upon some pretence now not known, in the custody of the serjeant in December; and, when he was released, upon his refusal of the fees demanded, he and the serjeant were called before the House. He was now safe within the shade of oblivion, and knew himself to be as much out of the power of a griping officer, as any other man. How the question was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended, but that he knew himself to have right on his side.

He then removed to Jewin-street, near Aldersgate-street; and being blind and by no means wealthy, wanted a domestick companion and attendant; and therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minshul, of a gentleman's family in Cheshire, probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband: upon what other principles his choice was made, cannot now be known; but marriage afforded not much of his happiness. The first wife left him in disgust, and was brought  
back

back only by terror; the second, indeed, seems to have been more a favourite, but her life was short. The third, as Philips relates, oppressed his children in his life-time, and cheated them at his death.

Soon after his marriage, according to an obscure story, he was offered the continuance of his employment; and being pressed by his wife to accept it, answered, "You, like other women, want to ride in your coach; my wish is to live and die an honest man." If he considered the Latin secretary as exercising any of the powers of government, he that had shared authority, either with the parliament or Cromwell, might have forbore to talk very loudly of his honesty; and if he thought the office purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the king. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition; large offers and sturdy rejections are among the common topicks of falsehood.

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forebore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and from this time devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning

learning in all its parts, he gave a proof by publishing, the next year (1661), *Accidence commenced Grammar*; a little book which has nothing remarkable, but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and was then writing *Paradise Lost*, could descend from his elevation to rescue children from the perplexity of grammatical confusion, and the trouble of lessons unnecessarily repeated.

About this time Elwood the quaker, being recommended to him as one who would read Latin to him, for the advantage of his conversation, attended him every afternoon, except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that *to read Latin with an English mouth is as ill a bearing as Low French*, required that Elwood should learn and practise the Italian pronunciation, which, he said, was necessary, if he would talk with foreigners. This seems to have been a task troublesome without use. There is little reason for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general; and to teach it to an Englishman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he speaks Latin,

may so soon learn the sounds which every native gives it, that he need make no provision before his journey; and if strangers visit us, it is their business to practise such conformity to our modes as they expect from us in their own countries. Elwood complied with the directions, and improved himself by his attendance, for he relates, that Milton, having a curious ear, knew by his voice when he read what he did not understand, and would stop him, and *open the most difficult passages.*

In a short time he took a house in the *Artillery Walk*, leading to *Bunhill Fields*; the mention of which concludes the register of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than any other.

He was now busied by *Paradise Lost*. Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy. Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorised story of a farce seen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus: *Let the Rainbow be the Fiddlestick of the Fiddle of Heaven.* It has been already shewn, that



that the first conception was a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramatick work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1655) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the king.

He long had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had yet perhaps no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments, and the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was *long chusing, and began late.*

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having

every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all publick stations, he is yet too great not to be traced by curiosity to his retirement; where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, sitting *before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as in his own room, receiving the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality.* His visitors of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported, by Wood, to have visited the house in Bread-street where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, *neatly enough dressed in black coats, sitting in a room hung with rusty green; pale but not cadaverous, with chalkstones in his hands. He said, that if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable.*

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.

He

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar ; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was a very remarkable circumstance in the composition of *Paradise Lost*, “ which I have a particular reason,” says he, “ to remember ; for whereas I “ had the perusal of it from the very beginning, “ for some years, as I went from time to time “ to visit him, in parcels of ten, twenty, or “ thirty verses at a time (which, being written “ by whatever hand came next, might possibly “ want correction as to the orthography and “ pointing), having as the summer came on, “ not been shewed any for a considerable while, “ and desiring the reason thereof, was answered, “ ed, that his vein never happily flowed but “ from the Autumnal Equinox to the Vernal ; “ and that whatever he attempted at other “ times was never to his satisfaction, though

N 3

“ he

“ he courted his fancy never so much ; so that,  
 “ in all the years he was about this poem, he  
 “ may be said to have spent half his time  
 “ therein.”

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion Philips has mistaken the time of the year ; for Milton, in his Elegies, declares that with the advance of the Spring he feels the increase of his poetical force, *redeunt in carmina vires*. To this it is answered, that Philips could hardly mistake time so well marked ; and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life. Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that *such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on.* By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependance of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur astris*. The author that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help  
 from



from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes; *possunt quia posse videntur*. When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross wind, or a cloudy sky, the day is given up without resistance; for who can contend with the course of Nature?

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of Nature. It was suspected that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that every thing was daily sinking by gradual diminution\*.

Milton

\* This opinion is, with great learning and ingenuity, refuted in a book now very little known, "An Apology or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World," by Dr. George Hakewill, London, folio, 1635. The first who ventured to propagate it in this country was Dr. Gabriel Goodman, bishop of Gloucester, a man of a versatile temper, and the author of a book entitled,

Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in *an age too late* for heroick poesy.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men; an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the *climate* of his country might be *too cold* for flights of imagination.

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influence of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

“The Fall of Man, or the Corruption of Nature proved by natural Reason.” Lond. 1616 and 1624, quarto. He was plundered in the Usurpation, turned Roman Catholic, and died in obscurity. Vide Athen. Oxon. vol. I. 727. H.

His

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying nature, or a frigid zone; for general causes must operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power; if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence by producing something which *they should not willingly let die*. However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity. He might still be a giant among the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to have been very diligent in his enquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that “ he would sometimes lie awake  
“ whole nights, but not a verse could he make;  
“ and on a sudden his poetical faculty would  
“ rush upon him with an *impetus* or *æstrum*,  
“ and

“and his daughter was immediately called to  
“secure what came. At other times he would  
“dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and  
“then reduce them to half the number.”

These bursts of light, and involutions of darkness, these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention, having some appearance of deviation from the common train of Nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanic cannot handle his hammer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when *his hand is out*. By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter *to secure what came*, may be questioned; for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visiter in disburthening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The



The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and, though doubtless true of every fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he composed much of his poem in the night and morning, I suppose before his mind was disturbed with common business; and that he poured out with great fluency his *unpremeditated verse*. Versification, free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book shews that he had lost his sight; and the Introduction to the seventh, that the return of the King had clouded him with discountenance; and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the Restoration. There are no other internal notes of time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty,

alty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection; but this, which, when he sculked from the approach of his King, was perhaps more than he hoped, seems not to have satisfied him; for no sooner is he safe, than he finds himself in danger, *fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compass'd round.* This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion: but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen indeed on *evil days*; the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of *evil tongues* for Milton to complain, required impudence at least equal to his other powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow, that he never spared any asperity of reproach or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies or his amusements, without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the

the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused : they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his King.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont in Bucks ; where Elwood, who had taken the house for him, first saw a complete copy of *Paradise Lost*, and, having perused it, said to him, " Thou hast said a great deal upon *Paradise Lost* ; " what hast thou to say upon *Paradise found* ? "

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to Bunhill-fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A license was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness ; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun eclipsed in the first book, yet the license was granted ; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simons, for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a stipulation to receive five pounds more when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition : and again, five pounds  
after

after the sale of the same number of the second edition: and another five pounds after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The first edition was ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year; and an advertisement and the arguments of the books were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him in two years a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small octavo; and the number of books was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh and twelfth; and some other small improvements were made. The third edition was published in 1678; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given Dec. 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683, half, March 24, 1690,



1690, at a price considerably enlarged. In the history of *Paradise Lost* a deduction thus minute will rather gratify than fatigue.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and enquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the *Paradise Lost* received no publick acclamations is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the Court: and who that solicited favour or fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides? All that he himself could think his due, from *evil tongues* in *evil days*, was that reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred that his poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the publick. Those who have no power to judge of past times but by their own, should always doubt

doubt their conclusions. The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is at present. To read was not then a general amusement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of knowledge. Those, indeed, who professed learning, were not less learned than at any other time; but of that middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be sufficient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakspeare, which probably did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately increase; for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did

did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years; for it forced its way without assistance: its admirers did not dare to publish their opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the Revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and *Paradise Lost* broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked its reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting, without impatience, the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his studies, and supplied the want of fight by a very odd

expedient, of which Philips gives the following account :

Mr. Philips tells us, “ that though our au-  
“ thor had daily about him one or other to  
“ read, some persons of man’s estate, who, of  
“ their own accord, greedily caught at the  
“ opportunity of being his readers, that they  
“ might as well reap the benefit of what they  
“ read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of  
“ their reading ; and others of younger years  
“ were sent by their parents to the same end:  
“ yet excusing only the eldest daughter, by  
“ reason of her bodily infirmity, and difficult  
“ utterance of speech, (which, to say truth, I  
“ doubt was the principal cause of excusing  
“ her,) the other two were condemned to the  
“ performance of reading, and exactly pro-  
“ nouncing of all the languages of whatever  
“ book he should, at one time or other, think  
“ fit to peruse, viz. the Hebrew (and I think  
“ the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Ita-  
“ lian, Spanish, and French. All which sorts  
“ of books to be confined to read, without un-  
“ derstanding one word, must needs be a trial  
“ of patience almost beyond endurance. Yet  
“ it was endured by both for a long time,  
“ though



“ though the irksomeness of this employment  
“ could not be always concealed, but broke  
“ out more and more into expressions of unea-  
“ siness; so that at length they were all, even  
“ the eldest also, sent out to learn some curious  
“ and ingenious sorts of manufacture, that are  
“ proper for women to learn; particularly  
“ embroideries in gold or silver.”

In this scene of misery which this mode of intellectual labour sets before our eyes, it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are most to be lamented. A language not understood can never be so read as to give pleasure, and very seldom so as to convey meaning. If few men would have had resolution to write books with such embarrassments, few likewise would have wanted ability to find some better expedient.

Three years after his *Paradise Lost* (1667), he published his *History of England*, comprising the whole fable of Geoffry of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman invasion. Why he should have given the first part, which he seems not to believe, and which is universally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The style is harsh; but it has something of rough vigour,

which perhaps may often strike, though it cannot please.

On this history the licenser again fixed his claws, and before he could transmit it to the press tore out several parts. Some censures of the Saxon monks were taken away, lest they should be applied to the modern clergy; and a character of the Long Parliament, and Assembly of Divines, was excluded; of which the author gave a copy to the earl of Anglesea, and which being afterwards published, has been since inserted in its proper place.

The same year were printed *Paradise Regained*, and *Sampson Agonistes*, a tragedy written in imitation of the Ancients, and never designed by the author for the stage. As these poems were published by another bookseller, it has been asked, whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former. Why a writer changed his bookseller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. Certainly, he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments of five pounds each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When

When Milton shewed *Paradise Regained* to Elwood, "This," said he, "is owing to you; "for you put it in my head by the question you "put to me at Chalfont, which otherwise I "had not thought of."

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Elwood relates, endure to hear *Paradise Lost* preferred to *Paradise Regained*. Many causes may vitiate a writer's judgement of his own works. On that which has cost him much labour he sets a high value, because he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain; what has been produced without toilsome efforts is considered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention; and the last work, whatever it be, has necessarily most of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himself.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehension, that entitle this great author to our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dignity, which did not disdain the meanest services to literature. The epic poet, the controvertist, the politician, having already descended to accommodate children with

a book of rudiments, now, in the last years of his life, composed a book of Logick, for the initiation of students in philosophy; and published (1672) *Artis Logicæ plenior Institutio ad Petri Rami Methodum concinnata*; that is, “A  
 “new Scheme of Logick, according to the  
 “Method of Ramus.” I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hostility against the Universities; for Ramus was one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools.

His polemical disposition again revived. He had now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published a *Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means to prevent the Growth of Popery*.

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the Church of England, and an appeal to the thirty-nine articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The papists appeal to other testimonies, and are therefore in his opinion not to be permitted



ted the liberty of either publick or private worship; for though they plead conscience, *we have no warrant, he says, to regard conscience, which is not grounded in Scripture.*

Those who are not convinced by his reasons, may be perhaps delighted with his wit. The term *Roman catholick* is, he says, *one of the Pope's bulls; it is particular universal, or catholick schismatick.*

He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against Popery, he recommends the diligent perusal of the Scriptures, a duty, from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused.

He now reprinted his juvenile poems, with some additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of Familiar Epistles in Latin; to which, being too few to make a volume, he added some academical exercises, which perhaps he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth; but for which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader.

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died by a quiet and silent expiration, about the tenth of November 1674, at his house in Bunhill-fields; and was buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles at Cripplegate. His funeral was very splendidly and numerously attended.

Upon his grave there is supposed to have been no memorial; but in our time a monument has been erected in Westminster-Abbey *To the Author of Paradise Lost*, by Mr. Benson, who has in the inscription bestowed more words upon himself than upon Milton.

When the inscription for the monument of Philips, in which he was said to be *soli Miltono secundus*, was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then dean of Westminster, he refused to admit it; the name of Milton was, in his opinion, too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who succeeded him, being author of the inscription, permitted its reception. "And such has been the change of publick opinion," said Dr. Gregory, from whom I heard this account,  
"that

“that I have seen erected in the church a statue of that man, whose name I once knew considered as a pollution of its walls.”

Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the Lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the fore-top, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroick stature, but rather below the middle size, according to Mr. Richardson, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being *short and thick*. He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have been eminently skilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the back-sword, of which he recommends the use in his book on Education.

His eyes are said never to have been bright; but, if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick.

His domestick habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without excess in quantity, and in his earlier years

years without delicacy of choice. In his youth he studied late at night; but afterwards changed his hours, and rested in bed from nine to four in the summer, and five in the winter. The course of his day was best known after he was blind. When he first rose, he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then studied till twelve; then took some exercise for an hour; then dined, then played on the organ, and sung, or heard another sing; then studied to six; then entertained his visitors till eight; then supped, and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, went to bed.

So is his life described; but this even tenour appears attainable only in Colleges. He that lives in the world will sometimes have the succession of his practice broken and confused. Visitors, of whom Milton is represented to have had great numbers, will come and stay unseasonably; business, of which every man has some, must be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to rise early, he had something read to him by his bedside; perhaps at this time his daughters were employed. He composed much in the morning, and dictated  
in



in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm.

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his personal estate to the parliament; but when, after the contest was decided, he solicited repayment, he met not only with neglect, but *sharp rebuke*; and, having tired both himself and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeless indignation, till he shewed how able he was to do greater service. He was then made Latin secretary, with two hundred pounds a year; and had a thousand pounds for his *Defence of the People*. His widow, who, after his death, retired to Namptwich in Cheshire, and died about 1729, is said to have reported that he lost two thousand pounds by entrusting it to a scrivener; and that, in the general depredation upon the Church, he had grasped an estate of about sixty pounds a year belonging to Westminster-Abbey, which, like other sharers of the plunder of rebellion, he was afterwards obliged to return. Two thousand pounds, which he had placed in the Excise-office, were also lost. There is yet no reason to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His  
wants,

wants, being few, were competently supplied. He sold his library before his death, and left his family fifteen hundred pounds, on which his widow laid hold, and only gave one hundred to each of his daughters.

His literature was unquestionably great. He read all the languages which are considered either as learned or polite; Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. In Latin his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and criticks; and he appears to have cultivated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who used to read to him, represented him as most delighting, after Homer, which he could almost repeat, were Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindness, now in my hands: the margin is sometimes noted; but I have found nothing remarkable.

Of the English poets he set most value upon Spenser, Shakspeare, and Cowley. Spenser was apparently his favourite: Shakspeare he may easily be supposed to like, with every skilful reader; but I should not have expected that Cowley, whose ideas of excellence were different

ent from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who sometimes visited him, was, that he was a good rhymist, but no poet.

His theological opinions are said to have been first Calvinistical; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the mixed questions of theology and government, he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery, or prelacy; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him, *magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur*. He had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve. He has not associated himself with any denomination of Protestants: we know rather what he was not than what he was. He was not of the church of Rome; he was not of the church of England.

To be of no church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpresed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to  
have

have had full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours, there was no hour of prayer, either solitary, or with his household; omitting public prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought, upon a supposition which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him, who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His



His political notions were those of an acrimonious and furly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that *a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth.* It is surely very shallow policy, that supposes money to be the chief good; and even this, without considering that the support and expence of a Court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffick, for which money is circulated, without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a fullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of controul, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected, that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's  
cha-

character, in domestic relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family some account may be expected. His sister, first married to Mr. Philips, afterwards married Mr. Agar, a friend of her first husband, who succeeded him in the Crown-office. She had by her first husband Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and by her second, two daughters.

His brother, Sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catherine\*; and a son

\* Both these persons were living at Holloway, about the year 1734, and at that time possessed such a degree of health and strength, as enabled them on Sundays and Prayer-days to walk a mile up a steep hill to Highgate chapel. One of them was Ninety-two at the time of her death. Their parentage was known to few, and their names were corrupted into Melton. By the Crown-office mentioned in the two last paragraphs, we are to understand the Crown-office of the Court of Chancery. H.

Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the Crown-office, and left a daughter living in 1749 in Grosvenor-street.

Milton had children only by his first wife; Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child. Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clark, a weaver in Spital-fields, and lived seventy-six years, to August 1727. This is the daughter of whom publick mention has been made. She could repeat the first lines of Homer, the Metamorphoses, and some of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a stand. Many repetitions are necessary to fix in memory lines not understood; and why should Milton wish or want to hear them so often! These lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not understood, the beginning raises no more attention than the end; and as those that understand it know commonly the beginning best, its rehearsal will seldom be necessary. It is not likely that Milton required any passage to be so much repeated as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he desired the initial

lines to be read at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal sounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addison made a present, and promised some establishment; but died soon after. Queen Caroline sent her fifty guineas. She had seven sons and three daughters; but none of them had any children, except her son Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George in the East Indies, and had two sons, of whom nothing is now known. Elizabeth married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spital-fields; and had seven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at Holloway, and afterwards in Cock-lane near Shoreditch Church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harshness to his daughters, and his refusal to have them taught to write; and, in opposition to other accounts, represented him as delicate, though temperate, in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, *Comus* was played for her benefit. She had so little acquaintance with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what

was



was intended when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only one hundred and thirty pounds, though Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; and twenty pounds were given by Tonson, a man who is to be praised as often as he is named. Of this sum one hundred pounds were placed in the stocks, after some debate between her and her husband in whose name it should be entered; and the rest augmented their little stock, with which they removed to Islington. This was the greatest benefaction that *Paradise Lost* ever procured the author's descendents; and to this he, who has now attempted to relate his Life, had the honour of contributing a Prologue.

IN the examination of Milton's poetical works, I shall pay so much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he seems to have had a degree of fondness not very laudable: what he has once written he resolves to preserve, and gives to the publick an unfinished poem, which he broke off because he was *nothing satisfied with what he had done*, supposing his readers less nice than himself. These preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and English. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to speak as a critick; but I have heard them commended by a man well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value; the elegies excell the odes; and some of the exercises on Gunpowder Treason might have been spared.

The English poems, though they make no promises of *Paradise Lost*, have this evidence of  
genius,

genius, that they have a cast original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence: if they differ from verses of others, they differ for the worse; for they are too often distinguished by repulsive harshness; the combinations of words are new, but they are not pleasing; the rhymes and epithets seem to be laboriously sought, and violently applied.

That in the early parts of his life he wrote with much care appears from his manuscripts, happily preserved at Cambridge, in which many of his smaller works are found as they were first written, with the subsequent corrections. Such reliques shew how excellence is acquired; what we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence.

Those who admire the beauties of this great poet, sometimes force their own judgement into false approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themselves to think that admirable which is only singular. All that short compositions can commonly attain is neatness and elegance. Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace; he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness;

he was a *Lion* that had no skill in *dandling the Kid*.

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas*; of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is, we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough *satyrs* and *fauns with cloven heel*. Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting; whatever images it can supply, are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours, and the partner of his  
dis-



discoveries ; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines !

We drove a field, and both together heard  
What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove a field, and that they had no flocks to batten ; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote, that it is never sought because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks, and copses, and flowers, appear the heathen deities ; Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a College easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise inventions, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping ; and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy ; he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most aw-

ful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendant of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful; but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure, had he not known its author.

Of the two pieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, I believe opinion is uniform; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure. The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to shew how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold' on those by which it may be gratified.

The

The *cheerful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *pensive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *cheerful* man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks *not unseen* to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milk-maid, and view the labours of the plowman and the mower; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse at midnight; and at another hears the fullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by *glowing embers*; or by a lonely lamp outwatches the North Star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and varies the shades of meditation, by contemplating the magnificent or pathetic scenes of tragick and epick poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water,  
and

and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some music played by aerial performers.

Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast, that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor the gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.

The man of *cheerfulness*, having exhausted the country, tries what *towered cities* will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendor, gay assemblies, and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as, when the learned comedies of Jonson, or the wild dramas of Shakspeare, are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The *pensive* man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the Church.

Both his characters delight in musick; but he seems to think that cheerful notes would have obtained from Pluto a compleat dismissal of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds only procured a conditional release.

For



For the old age of Chearfulness he makes no provision ; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life. His Chearfulness is without levity, and his Pensiveness without asperity.

Through these two poems the images are properly selected, and nicely distinguished ; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy ; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination\*.

The greatest of his juvenile performances is the *Mask of Comus*, in which may very plainly

\* Mr. Warton intimates (and there can be little doubt of the truth of his conjecture) that Milton borrowed many of the images in these two fine poems from "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy," a book published in 1624, and at sundry times since, abounding in learning, curious information, and pleasantry. Mr. Warton says, that Milton appears to have been an attentive reader thereof ; and to this assertion I add of my own knowledge, that it was a book that Dr. Johnson frequently resorted to, as many others have done, for amusement after the fatigue of study. H.

be discovered the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*. Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgement approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does *Comus* afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A Masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers; who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to  
find

find their way back, and leave a helpless Lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This however is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramattick representation, that no precedents can support it.

The discourse of the Spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches: they have not the spriteliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The

The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last the Brothers enter, with too much tranquillity; and when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the Elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the Younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the Spirit in form of a shepherd; and the Brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and enquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the Brother moralises again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good Being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocration



procation of objections and replies, to invite attention, and detain it.

The songs are vigorous, and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole, the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epick style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.

The *Sonnets* were written in different parts of Milton's life, upon different occasions. They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabrick of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which, having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.

Those little pieces may be dispatched without much anxiety; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine *Paradise Lost*; a poem, which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect

respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind.

By the general consent of criticks, the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epick poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epick poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatick energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds, and different shades, of vice and virtue; from policy, and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character, and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined; and phyiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature, and realizing fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained

attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

Bossu is of opinion that the poet's first work is to find a *moral*, which his fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. This seems to have been the process only of Milton; the moral of other poems is incidental and consequent; in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsic. His purpose was the most useful and the most arduous; *to vindicate the ways of God to man*; to shew the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law.

To convey this moral, there must be a *fable*, a narration artfully constructed, so as to excite curiosity, and surprise expectation. In this part of his work, Milton must be confessed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved in his account of the Fall of Man the events which preceded, and those that were to follow it: he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety, that every part appears to be necessary; and scarcely

any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epick poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth; rebellion, against the Supreme King, raised by the highest order of created beings; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude, or deviation of will, depended the state of terrestrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

Of



Of the other agents in the poem, the chief are such as it is irreverence to name on slight occasions. The rest were lower powers;

—— of which the least could wield  
Those elements, and arm him with the force  
Of all their regions;

powers, which only the controul of Omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste, and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. To display the motives and actions of beings thus superiour, so far as human reason can examine them, or human imagination represent them, is the task which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

In the examination of epick poems much speculation is commonly employed upon the *characters*. The characters in the *Paradise Lost*, which admit of examination, are those of angels and of man; of angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and sinful state.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel

appear occasionally, and act as every incident requires; the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison observes, such sentiments are given as suit *the most exalted and most depraved being*. Milton has been censured by Clarke \*, for the impiety which sometimes breaks from Satan's mouth. For there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the great difficulties in Milton's undertaking, and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

\* Author of the "Essay on Study."

Dr. J.

The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council with exact consistency.

To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil. Their addresses to their Maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask, and Innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the Fall, the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Of the *probable* and the *marvellous*, two parts of a vulgar epic poem, which immerse the critic in deep consideration, the *Paradise Lost* requires little to be said. It contains the his-

tory of a miracle, of Creation and Redemption; it displays the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being; the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth; and as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to every thing human, some slight exceptions may be made. But the main fabrick is immovably supported.

It is justly remarked by Addison, that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the *machinery*, so called from Θεός ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topick of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because every thing is done under the immediate and visible direction of Heaven; but the rule is so far observed, that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means.

Of *episodes*, I think there are only two, contained



tained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven, and Michael's prophetic account of the changes to happen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action; one was necessary to Adam as a warning, the other as a consolation.

To the compleatness or *integrity* of the design nothing can be objected; it has distinctly and clearly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is perhaps no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long description of a shield. The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth books, might doubtless be spared; but superfluities so beautiful, who would take away? or who does not wish that the author of the *Iliad* has gratified succeeding ages with a little knowledge of himself? Perhaps no passages are more frequently or more attentively read than those extrinsic paragraphs; and, since the end of poetry is pleasure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleased.

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly *one*, whether the poem can be

properly termed *heroick*, and who is the hero, are raised by such readers as draw their principles of judgement rather from books than from reason. Milton, though he intituled *Paradise Lost* only a *poem*, yet calls it himself *heroick song*. Dryden, petulantly and indecently, denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome; but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be suffered by Quintilian to decide. However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank.

After the scheme and fabrick of the poem, must be considered its component parts, the sentiments and the diction.

The *sentiments*, as expressive of manners, or appropriated to characters, are, for the greater part, unexceptionably just.

Splendid passages, containing lessons of morality, or precepts of prudence, occur seldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that as it admits no human manners till the Fall,

Fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct. Its end is to raise the thoughts above sublunary cares or pleasures. Yet the praise of that fortitude, with which Abdiel maintained his singularity of virtue against the scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curiosity after the planetary motions, with the answer returned by Adam, may be confidently opposed to any rule of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress, are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind might be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions therefore were extensive. The characteristic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes de-

descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantick loftiness\*. He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful: he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are, requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can

\* Algarotti terms it *gigantesca sublimità Miltoniana*. Dr. J.



travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds; he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of Nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw Nature, as Dryden expresses it, *through the spectacles of books*; and on most occasions calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of *Enna*, where Proserpine was gathering flowers. Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like *Argo* between the *Cyanean* rocks, or *Ulysses* between the two *Sicilian* whirlpools, when he shunned *Charybdis* on the *larboard*. The mythological allusions have been justly censured, as not being always used with notice of their

vanity; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exercise of the memory and the fancy.

His families are less numerous, and more various, than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison: his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the Moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets; for this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the sacred writings. The ancient epick poets, wanting the light of Revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue: their principal characters may be great, but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy.

From

From the Italian writers it appears, that the advantages of even Christian knowledge may be possessed in vain. Ariosto's pravity is generally known ; and though the *Deliverance of Jerusalem* may be considered as a sacred subject, the poet has been very sparing of moral instruction.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought, and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits ; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence, and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two ; but those two are the parents of mankind, venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable after it for repentance and submission. In their first state their affection is tender without weakness, and their piety sublime without presumption. When they have sinned, they shew how discord begins in mutual frailty, and how it ought to cease in mutual forbearance, how confidence of the divine favour is forfeited by sin, and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and prayer. A state  
of

of innocence we can only conceive, if indeed, in our present misery, it be possible to conceive it; but the sentiments and worship proper to a fallen and offending being, we have all to learn, as we have all to practise.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors, in their first state, conversed with angels; even when folly and sin had degraded them, they had not in their humiliation *the port of mean suitors*; and they rise again to reverential regard, when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human passions did not enter the world before the Fall, there is in the *Paradise Lost* little opportunity for the pathetick; but what little there is has not been lost. That passion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguish arising from the consciousness of transgression, and the horrors attending the sense of the Divine Displeasure, are very justly described and forcibly impressed. But the passions are moved only on one occasion; sublimity is the general and prevailing quality in this poem; sublimity variously modified, sometimes descriptive, sometimes argumentative.

The



The defects and faults of *Paradise Lost*, for faults and defects every work of man must have, it is the business of impartial criticism to discover. As, in displaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had been no end, I shall in the same general manner mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages, which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honour of our country?

The generality of my scheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies; which Bentley, perhaps better skilled in grammar than poetry, has often found, though he sometimes made them, and which he imputed to the obtrusions of a reviser, whom the author's blindness obliged him to employ, a supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and vile and pernicious, if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.

The plan of *Paradise Lost* has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer, are in a state which

no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effects of Adam's disobedience; we all sin like Adam, and like him must all bewail our offences; we have restless and insidious enemies in the fallen angels, and in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the Redemption of mankind we hope to be included; in the description of heaven and hell we are surely interested, as we are all to reside hereafter either in the regions of horror or bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new; they have been taught to our infancy; they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversation, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new, they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind; what we knew before, we cannot learn; what is not unexpected, cannot surprise.

Of

Of the ideas suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their association ; and from others we shrink with horror, or admit them only as salutary inflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terrour are indeed the genuine sources of poetry ; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can at least conceive, and poetical terrour such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit ; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths, however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself. Whoever considers the few radical positions which the Scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetic operation he expanded them to such extent, and ramified them to so

much variety, restrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius ; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgement to digest, and fancy to combine them : Milton was able to select from nature, or from story, from an ancient fable, or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study, and exalted by imagination.

It has been therefore said, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiasts, that in reading *Paradise Lost* we read a book of universal knowledge.

But original deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harrassed, and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation ; we desert our master, and seek for companions.

Another



Another inconvenience of Milton's design is, that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action; he therefore invested them with form and matter. This, being necessary, was therefore defensible; and he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts. But he has unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the *burning marle*, he has a body; when in his passage between hell and the new world, he is in danger of sinking in the vacuity, and is supported by a gust of rising vapours, he has a body; when he animates the toad, he seems to be mere spirit, that can penetrate matter at pleasure; when he *starts up in his own shape*, he has at least a determined form; and when he is brought before Gabriel, he has *a spear and a shield*, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms

of the contending angels are evidently material.

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandæmonium, being *incorporeal spirits*, are *at large, though without number*, in a limited space: yet in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, *crushed in upon their substance, now grown gross by sinning*. This likewise happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown the *sooner for their arms, for unarmed they might easily as spirits have evaded by contraction or remove*. Even as spirits they are hardly spiritual; for *contraction and remove* are images of matter; but if they could have escaped without their armour, they might have escaped from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a sun-beam, is material; Satan is material when he is afraid of the prowess of Adam.

The confusion of spirit and matter which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven fills it with incongruity; and the book, in which it is related, is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased.

After

After the operation of immaterial agents, which cannot be explained, may be considered that of allegorical persons, which have no real existence. To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form, and animate them with activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office, and retire. Thus Fame tells a tale, and Victory hovers over a general, or perches on a standard; but Fame and Victory can do more. To give them any real employment, or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity. In the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, we see *Violence* and *Strength*, and in the *Alceſtis* of Euripides, we see *Death*, brought upon the stage, all as active persons of the drama; but no precedents can justify absurdity.

Milton's allegory of Sin and Death is undoubtedly faulty. Sin is indeed the mother of Death, and may be allowed to be the portress of hell; but when they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken.

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That Sin and Death should have shewn the way to hell, might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The hell assigned to the rebellious spirits is described as not less local than the residence of man. It is placed in some distant part of space, separated from the regions of harmony and order by a chaotick waste and an unoccupied vacuity; but *Sin* and *Death* worked up a *mole* of *aggravated soil*, cemented with *asphaltus*; a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem; and to this there was no temptation, but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative some objection may be made. Satan is with great expectation brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and is suffered to go away unmolested. The creation of man is represented as the consequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulsion of the rebels; yet Satan mentions it as a report *rife in heaven* before his departure.

To

To find sentiments for the state of innocence, was very difficult; and something of anticipation perhaps is now and then discovered. Adam's discourse of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety; it is the speech of a man acquainted with many other men. Some philosophical notions, especially when the philosophy is false, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a comparison, speaks of *timorous deer*, before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could understand the comparison.

Dryden remarks, that Milton has some flats among his elevations. This is only to say, that all the parts are not equal. In every work, one part must be for the sake of others; a palace must have passages; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing, than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed

sometimes to revisit earth ; for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long ?

Milton, being well versed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them ; and, as every man catches something from his companions, his desire of imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the *Paradise of Fools* ; a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place.

His play on words, in which he delights too often ; his equivocations, which Bentley endeavours to defend by the example of the ancients ; his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art ; it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily remarked, and generally censured, and at last bear so little proportion to the whole, that they scarcely deserve the attention of a critick.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance *Paradise Lost* ; which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice but as dull, as less to be censured for want of candour, than pitied for want of sensibility.

Of



Of *Paradise Regained*, the general judgement seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and every-where instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of *Paradise Lost* could ever write without great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of *Paradise Regained* is narrow, a dialogue without action can never please like an union of the narrative and dramatic powers. Had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

If *Paradise Regained* has been too much depreciated, *Sampson Agonistes* has in requital been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice, and the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages ; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton, that a drama can be praised in which the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe

In this tragedy are however many particular beauties, many just sentiments and striking lines ;  
but

but it wants that power of attracting the attention which a well-connected plan produces.

Milton would not have excelled in dramatic writing; he knew human nature only in the gross, and had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach; but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *Diction*, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer, and which is so far removed from common use, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surpris'd by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, says Addison, *sunk under him*. But the truth is, that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantick principle. He was desirous to use English words with a  
foreign

foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there judgement operates freely, neither softened by the beauty, nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Milton's style was not modified by his subject: what is shown with greater extent in *Paradise Lost*, may be found in *Comus*. One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets: the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian; perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues. Of him, at last, may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that *he wrote no language*, but has formed what *Butler* calls a *Babylonish Dialect*, in itself harsh and barbarous, but made by exalted genius and extensive learning, the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety: he was master of his language in its full extent;

extent; and has selected the melodious words with such diligence, that from his book alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned.

After his diction, something must be said of his *versification*. *The measure*, he says, *is the English hersick verse without rhyme*. Of this mode he had many examples among the Italians, and some in his own country. The Earl of Surrey is said to have translated one of Virgil's books without rhyme; and, besides our tragedies, a few short poems had appeared in blank verse, particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himself. These petty performances cannot be supposed to have much influenced Milton, who more probably took his hint from Trissino's *Italia Liberata*; and, finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it is better.

*Rhyme*, he says, and says truly, *is no necessary adjunct of true poetry*. But perhaps, of poetry as a mental operation, metre or musick is no necessary adjunct: it is however by the musick of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages; and in languages melodiously  
con-



constructed with a due proportion of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another: where metre is scanty and imperfect, some help is necessary. The musick of the English heroick line strikes the ear so faintly that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together: this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few happy readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verse*, said an ingenious critick, *seems to be verse only to the eye.*

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the *lapidary style*; has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by  
long

long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence, has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymier; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing, may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please, must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epick poem, and therefore owes reverence to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the  
thoughts

thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroick poems, only because it is not the first.

B U T.

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**B U T L E R.**

**O**F the great author of Hudibras there is a life prefixed to the latter editions of his poem, by an unknown writer, and therefore of disputable authority; and some account is incidentally given by Wood, who confesses the uncertainty of his own narrative; more however than they knew cannot now be learned, and nothing remains but to compare and copy them.

**SAMUEL BUTLER** was born in the parish of Strensham in Worcestershire, according to his biographer, in 1612. This account Dr. Nash finds confirmed by the register. He was christened Feb. 14.

His father's condition is variously represented. Wood mentions him as competently wealthy;



thy; but Mr. Longueville, the son of Butler's principal friend, says he was an honest farmer with some small estate, who made a shift to educate his son at the grammar school of Worcester, under Mr. Henry Bright\*, from whose

\* These are the words of the author of the short account of Butler, prefixed to *Hudibras*, which Dr. Johnson, notwithstanding what he says above, seems to have supposed was written by Mr. Longueville, the father; but the contrary is to be inferred from a subsequent passage, wherein the author laments that he had neither such an acquaintance nor interest with Mr. Longueville, as to procure from him the golden remains of Butler there mentioned. He was probably led into this mistake by a note in the *Biog. Brit.* p. 1077, signifying, that the son of this gentleman was living in 1736.

Of this friend and generous patron of Butler, Mr. William Longueville, I find an account, written by a person who was well acquainted with him, to this effect, viz. that he was a conveyancing lawyer, and a bencher of the Inner Temple, and had raised himself from a low beginning to very great eminence in that profession; that he was eloquent, and learned, of spotless integrity; that he supported an aged father who had ruined his fortunes by extravagance, and by his industry and application re-edified a ruined family; that he supported Butler, who, but for him, must literally have starved, and received from him as a recompence the papers called his Remains. *Life of the Lord-keeper Guilford*, p. 289. These have since been given to the public by Mr. Thyer of Manchester; and the originals are now in the hands of the Rev. Dr. Farmer, master of Emanuel College, Cambridge. 11.

care he removed for a short time to Cambridge; but, for want of money, was never made a member of any college. Wood leaves us rather doubtful whether he went to Cambridge or Oxford; but at last him makes pass six or seven years at Cambridge, without knowing in what hall or college: yet it can hardly be imagined that he lived so long in either university, but as belonging to one house or another; and it is still less likely that he could have so long inhabited a place of learning with so little distinction as to leave his residence uncertain. Dr. Nash has discovered that his father was owner of a house and a little land, worth about eight pounds a year, still called *Butler's tenement*.

Wood has his information from his brother, whose narrative placed him at Cambridge, in opposition to that of his neighbours, which sent him to Oxford. The brother's seems the best authority, till, by confessing his inability to tell his hall or college, he gives reason to suspect that he was resolved to bestow on him an academical education; but durst not name a college, for fear of detection.

He

He was for some time, according to the author of his Life, clerk to Mr. Jefferys of Earl's Croomb in Worcestershire, an eminent justice of the peace. In his service he had not only leisure for study, but for recreation: his amusements were musick and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendship of the celebrated Cooper. Some pictures, said to be his, were shewn to Dr. Nash, at Earl's Croomb; but when he enquired for them some years afterwards, he found them destroyed, to stop windows, and owns that they hardly deserved a better fate.

He was afterwards admitted into the family of the Countess of Kent, where he had the use of a library; and so much recommended himself to Selden, that he was often employed by him in literary business. Selden, as is well known, was steward to the Countess, and is supposed to have gained much of his wealth by managing her estate.

In what character Butler was admitted into that Lady's service, how long he continued in it, and why he left it, is, like the other incidents of his life, utterly unknown.

The vicissitudes of his condition placed him afterwards in the family of Sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwell's officers. Here he observed so much of the character of the sectaries, that he is said to have written or begun his poem at this time; and it is likely that such a design would be formed in a place where he saw the principles and practices of the rebels, audacious and undisguised in the confidence of success.

At length the King returned, and the time came in which loyalty hoped for its reward. Butler, however, was only made secretary to the Earl of Carbury, president of the principality of Wales; who conferred on him the stewardship of Ludlow Castle, when the Court of the Marches was revived.

In this part of his life, he married Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of a good family; and lived, says Wood, upon her fortune, having studied the common law, but never practised it. A fortune she had, says his biographer, but it was lost by bad securities.

In 1663 was published the first part, containing three cantos, of the poem of Hudibras, which, as Prior relates, was made known at

Court



Court by the taste and influence of the Earl of Dorset. When it was known, it was necessarily admired: the king quoted, the courtiers studied, and the whole party of the royalists applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden shower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation.

In 1664 the second part appeared; the curiosity of the nation was rekindled, and the writer was again praised and elated. But praise was his whole reward. Clarendon, says Wood, gave him reason to hope for "places and employments of value and credit;" but no such advantages did he ever obtain. It is reported that the King once gave him three hundred guineas; but of this temporary bounty I find no proof.

Wood relates that he was secretary to Villiers Duke of Buckingham, when he was Chancellor of Cambridge: this is doubted by the other writer, who yet allows the Duke to have been his frequent benefactor. That both these accounts are false there is reason to suspect, from a story told by Packe, in his account of the Life of Wycherley; and from

some verses which Mr. Thyer has published in the author's Remains.

“ Mr. Wycherley,” says Packe, “ had always laid hold of an opportunity which offered of representing to the Duke of Buckingham how well Mr. Butler had deserved of the royal family, by writing his inimitable *Hu-dibras*; and that it was a reproach to the Court, that a person of his loyalty and wit should suffer in obscurity, and under the wants he did. The duke always seemed to hearken to him with attention enough; and after some time, undertook to recommend his pretensions to his Majesty. Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep him steady to his word, obtained of his Grace to name a day, when he might introduce that modest and unfortunate poet to his new patron. At last an appointment was made, and the place of meeting was agreed to be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and his friend attended accordingly: the Duke joined them; but, as the d——I would have it, the door of the room where they sat was open, and his Grace, who had seated himself near it, observing a pimp of his acquaintance (the creature too

“ was

“ was a knight) trip by with a brace of Ladies,  
“ dies, immediately quitted his engagement,  
“ to follow another kind of business, at which  
“ he was more ready than in doing good offices  
“ to men of desert; though no one was better  
“ qualified than he, both in regard to his fortune and understanding, to protect them,  
“ and, from that time to the day of his death,  
“ poor Butler never found the least effect of  
“ his promise!”

Such is the story. The verses are written with a degree of acrimony, such as neglect and disappointment might naturally excite; and such as it would be hard to imagine Butler capable of expressing against a man who had any claim to his gratitude.

Notwithstanding this discouragement and neglect, he still prosecuted his design; and in 1678 published the third part, which still leaves the poem imperfect and abrupt. How much more he originally intended, or with what events the action was to be concluded, it is vain to conjecture. Nor can it be thought strange that he should stop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is sufficiently unpleasing. He had now arrived at

an age when he might think it proper to be in jest no longer, and perhaps his health might now begin to fail.

He died in 1680; and Mr. Longueville, having unsuccessfully solicited a subscription for his interment in Westminster Abbey, buried him at his own cost in the church-yard of Covent Garden\*. Dr. Simon Patrick read the service.

Granger was informed by Dr. Pearce, who named for his authority Mr. Lowndes of the treasury, that Butler had an yearly pension of an hundred pounds. This is contradicted by all tradition, by the complaints of Oldham, and by the reproaches of Dryden; and I am afraid will never be confirmed.

About sixty years afterwards, Mr. Barber, a printer, Mayor of London, and a friend to Butler's principles, bestowed on him a monument in Westminster Abbey, thus inscribed:

\* In a note in the "Biographia Britannica," p. 1075, he is said, on the authority of the younger Mr. Longueville, to have lived for some years in Rose Street, Covent Garden, and also that he died there; the latter of these particulars is rendered highly probable by his being interred in the cemetery of that parish. H.



M. S.

S A M U E L I S B U T L E R I,

Qui *Strensamiæ* in agro *Vigorn.* nat. 1612,obiit *Lond.* 1680.

Vir doctus imprimis, acer, integer ;  
 Operibus Ingenii, non item præmiis, fœlix :  
*Satyrici* apud nos Carminis Artifex egregius ;  
 Quo simulatæ Religionis Larvam detraxit,  
 Et Perduellium scelera liberrime exagitavit ;  
 Scriptorum in suo genere, Primus & Postremus..

Ne, cui vivo deerant ferè omnia,

Deesset etiam mortuo Tumulus,

Hoc tandem posito marmore, curavit

JOHANNIS BARBER, Civis *Londinensis*, 1721.

After his death were published three small volumes of his posthumous works: I know not by whom collected, or by what authority ascertained\*; and, lately, two volumes more have been printed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, indubitably genuine. From none of these pieces can his life be traced, or his character discovered. Some verses, in the last collection, shew him to have been among those who ridiculed the institution of the Royal Society,

\* They were collected into one, and published in 12mo. 1732. H.

of which the enemies were for some time very numerous and very acrimonious, for what reason it is hard to conceive, since the philosophers professed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts; and the most zealous enemy of innovation must admit the gradual progress of experience, however he may oppose hypothetical temerity.

In this mist of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variously related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.

THE poem of Hudibras is one of those compositions of which a nation may justly boast; as the images which it exhibits are domestic, the sentiments unborrowed and unexpected, and the strain of diction original and peculiar. We must not, however, suffer the pride, which we assume as the countrymen of Butler, to make any encroachment upon justice, nor appropriate those honours which others have a right to share. The poem of Hudibras is not wholly English; the original idea is to be found in the history of Don Quixote; a book to which a mind of the greatest powers may be indebted without disgrace.

Cervantes shews a man, who having, by the incessant perusal of incredible tales, subjected his understanding to his imagination, and familiarised his mind by pertinacious meditation to trains of incredible events and scenes of impossible existence, goes out in the pride of knighthood to redress wrongs, and defend virgins, to rescue captive princesses, and tumble usurpers from their thrones; attended by a squire, whose cunning, too low for the  
sus-

suspicion of a generous mind, enables him often to cheat his master.

The hero of Butler is a Presbyterian Justice, who, in the confidence of legal authority, and the rage of zealous ignorance, ranges the country to repress superstition and correct abuses, accompanied by an Independent Clerk; disputatious and obstinate, with whom he often debates, but never conquers him.

Cervantes had so much kindness for Don Quixote, that, however he embarrasses him with absurd distresses, he gives him so much sense and virtue as may preserve our esteem: wherever he is, or whatever he does, he is made by matchless dexterity commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible.

But for poor Hudibras, his poet had no tenderness; he chuses not that any pity should be shewn or respect paid him: he gives him up at once to laughter and contempt, without any quality that can dignify or protect him.

In forming the character of Hudibras, and describing his person and habiliments, the author seems to labour with a tumultuous confusion of dissimilar ideas. He had read the history of the mock knights-errant; he knew the

no-



notions and manners of a Presbyterian magistrate, and tried to unite the absurdities of both, however distant, in one personage. Thus he gives him that pedantic ostentation of knowledge which has no relation to chivalry, and loads him with martial encumbrances that can add nothing to his civil dignity. He sends him out a *colonelling*, and yet never brings him within sight of war.

If Hudibras be considered as the representative of the Presbyterians, it is not easy to say why his weapons should be represented as ridiculous or useless; for, whatever judgement might be passed upon their knowledge or their arguments, experience had sufficiently shown that their swords were not to be despised.

The hero, thus compounded of swaggerer and pedant, of knight and justice, is led forth to action, with his squire Ralpho, an Independent enthusiast.

Of the contexture of events planned by the author, which is called the action of the poem, since it is left imperfect, no judgement can be made. It is probable, that the hero was to be led through many luckless adventures, which would give occasion, like his attack upon the  
*bear*

*bear and fiddle*, to expose the ridiculous rigour of the sectaries; like his encounter with Sidrophel and Whacum, to make superstition and credulity contemptible; or, like his recourse to the low retailer of the law, discover the fraudulent practices of different professions.

What series of events he would have formed, or in what manner he would have rewarded or punished his hero, it is now vain to conjecture. His work must have had, as it seems, the defect which Dryden imputes to Spenser; the action could not have been one; those could only have been a succession of incidents, each of which might have happened without the rest, and which could not all co-operate to any single conclusion.

The discontinuity of the action might however have been easily forgiven, if there had been action enough: but I believe every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains that in the poem of *Hudibras*, as in the history of *Thucydides*, there is more said than done. The scenes are too seldom changed, and the attention is tired with long conversation.

It

It is indeed much more easy to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every position makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an answer. When two disputants are engaged upon a complicated and extensive question, the difficulty is not to continue, but to end the controversy. But whether it be that we comprehend but few of the possibilities of life, or that life itself affords little variety, every man who has tried knows how much labour it will cost to form such a combination of circumstances, as shall have at once the grace of novelty and credibility, and delight fancy without violence to reason.

Perhaps the Dialogue of this poem is not perfect. Some power of engaging the attention might have been added to it, by quicker reciprocation, by seasonable interruptions, by sudden questions, and by a nearer approach to dramatick spriteliness; without which fictitious speeches will always tire, however sparkling with sentences, and however variegated with allusions.

The great source of pleasure is variety. Uniformity must tire at last, though it be uniformity of excellence. We love to expect;  
and,

and, when expectation is disappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting. For this impatience of the present, whoever would please must make provision. The skilful writer *irritat, mulcet*, makes a due distribution of the still and animated parts. It is for want of this artful intertexture, and those necessary changes, that the whole of a book may be tedious, though all the parts are praised.

If unexhaustible wit could give perpetual pleasure, no eye would ever leave half-read the work of Butler; for what poet has ever brought so many remote images so happily together? It is scarcely possible to peruse a page without finding some association of images that was never found before. By the first paragraph the reader is amused, by the next he is delighted, and by a few more strained to astonishment; but astonishment is a toilsome pleasure; he is soon weary of wondering, and longs to be diverted.

Omnia vult belle Matho dicere, dic aliquando  
Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male.

Imagination is useless without knowledge:  
nature gives in vain the power of combination,  
unless



unless study and observation supply materials to be combined. Butler's treasures of knowledge appear proportioned to his expence: whatever topic employs his mind, he shews himself qualified to expand and illustrate it with all the accessaries that books can furnish: he is found not only to have travelled the beaten road, but the bye-paths of literature; not only to have taken general surveys, but to have examined particulars with minute inspection.

If the French boast the learning of Rabelais, we need not be afraid of confronting them with Butler.

But the most valuable parts of his performance are those which retired study and native wit cannot supply. He that merely makes a book from books may be useful, but can scarcely be great. Butler had not suffered life to glide beside him unseen or unobserved. He had watched with great diligence the operations of human nature, and traced the effects of opinion, humour, interest, and passion. From such remarks proceeded that great number of sententious distichs which have passed into conversation, and are

added as proverbial axioms to the general stock of practical knowledge.

When any work has been viewed and admired, the first question of intelligent curiosity is, how was it performed? Hudibras was not a hasty effusion; it was not produced by a sudden tumult of imagination, or a short paroxysm of violent labour. To accumulate such a mass of sentiments at the call of accidental desire, or of sudden necessity, is beyond the reach and power of the most active and comprehensive mind. I am informed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, the excellent editor of this author's reliques, that he could shew something like Hudibras in prose. He has in his possession the common-place book, in which Butler repositied, not such events or precepts as are gathered by reading, but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences, as occasion prompted, or meditation produced, those thoughts that were generated in his own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. Such is the labour of those who write for immortality.

But human works are not easily found without a perishable part. Of the ancient poets  
every

every reader feels the mythology tedious and oppressive. Of Hudibras, the manners, being founded on opinions, are temporary and local, and therefore become every day less intelligible, and less striking. What Cicero says of philosophy is true likewise of wit and humour, that "time effaces the fictions of opinion, and confirms the determinations of Nature." Such manners as depend upon standing relations and general passions are co-extended with the race of man; but those modifications of life, and peculiarities of practice, which are the progeny of error and perverseness, or at best of some accidental influence or transient persuasion, must perish with their parents.

Much therefore of that humour which transported the century with merriment is lost to us, who do not know the four solemnity, the fullen superstition, the gloomy moroseness, and the stubborn scruples of the ancient Puritans; or, if we knew them, derive our information only from books, or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot but by recollection and study understand the lines in which they are satyrised. Our grandfathers knew the picture from the life,

we judge of the life by contemplating the picture.

It is scarcely possible, in the regularity and composure of the present time, to image the tumult of absurdity, and clamour of contradiction, which perplexed doctrine, disordered practice, and disturbed both publick and private quiet, in that age when subordination was broken, and he was hissed away; when any unsettled innovator who could hatch a half-formed notion produced it to the publick; when every man might become a preacher, and almost every preacher could collect a congregation.

The wisdom of the nation is very reasonably supposed to reside in the parliament. What can be concluded of the lower classes of the people, when in one of the parliaments summoned by Cromwell it was seriously proposed, that all the records in the Tower should be burnt, that all memory of things past should be effaced, and that the whole system of life should commence anew?

We have never been witnesses of animosities excited by the use of mince pies and plumb porridge; nor seen with what abhorrence those  
who



who could eat them at all other times of the year would shrink from them in December. An old Puritan, who was alive in my childhood, being at one of the feasts of the church invited by a neighbour to partake his cheer, told him, that, if he would treat him at an alehouse with beer, brewed for all times and seasons, he should accept his kindness, but would have none of his superstitious meats and drinks.

One of the puritanical tenets was the illegality of all games of chance; and he that reads Gataker upon *Lots* may see how much learning and reason one of the first scholars of his age thought necessary, to prove that it was no crime to throw a dye, or play at cards, or to hide a shilling for the reckoning.

Astrology, however, against which so much of the satire is directed, was not more the folly of the Puritans than of others. It had in that time a very extensive dominion. Its predictions raised hopes and fears in minds which ought to have rejected it with contempt. In hazardous undertakings care was taken to begin under the influence of a propitious planet; and when the king was prisoner in Carisbrook

Castle, an astrologer was consulted what hour would be found most favourable to an escape.

What effect this poem had upon the publick, whether it shamed imposture or reclaimed credulity, is not easily determined. Cheats can seldom stand long against laughter. It is certain that the credit of planetary intelligence wore fast away; though some men of knowledge, and Dryden among them, continued to believe that conjunctions and oppositions had a great part in the distribution of good or evil, and in the government of sublunary things.

Poetical Action ought to be probable upon certain suppositions, and such probability as burlesque requires is here violated only by one incident. Nothing can shew more plainly the necessity of doing something, and the difficulty of finding something to do, than that Butler was reduced to transfer to his hero the flagellation of Sancho, not the most agreeable fiction of Cervantes; very suitable indeed to the manners of that age and nation, which ascribed wonderful efficacy to voluntary penances; but so remote from the practice and opinions of the Hudibrastick time, that judgement and imagination are alike offended.

The

The diction of this poem is grossly familiar, and the numbers purposely neglected, except in a few places where the thoughts by their native excellence secure themselves from violation, being such as mean language cannot express. The mode of versification has been blamed by Dryden, who regrets that the heroick measure was not rather chosen. To the critical sentence of Dryden the highest reverence would be due, were not his decisions often precipitate, and his opinions immature. When he wished to change the measure, he probably would have been willing to change more. If he intended that, when the numbers were heroick, the diction should still remain vulgar, he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural composition. If he preferred a general stateliness both of sound and words, he can be only understood to wish Butler had undertaken a different work.

The measure is quick, spritely, and colloquial, suitable to the vulgarity of the words and the levity of the sentiments. But such numbers and such diction can gain regard only when they are used by a writer whose vigour

of fancy and copiousness of knowledge entitle him to contempt of ornaments, and who, in confidence of the novelty and justness of his conceptions, can afford to throw metaphors and epithets away. To another that conveys common thoughts in careless versification, it will only be said, "*Pauper videri Cinna vult, & est pauper.*" The meaning and diction will be worthy of each other, and criticism may justly doom them to perish together.

Nor even though another Butler should arise, would another Hudibras obtain the same regard. Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the style and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural; and from what is unnatural we can derive only the pleasure which novelty produces. We admire it awhile as a strange thing; but when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice, which by frequent repetition  
detects



detects itself; and the reader learning in time what he is to expect, lays down his book, as the spectator turns away from a second exhibition of those tricks, of which the only use is to shew that they can be played.

## R O C H E S T E R.

**J**OHAN WILMOT, afterwards Earl of Rochester, the son of Henry Earl of Rochester, better known by the title of Lord Wilmot so often mentioned in Clarendon's History, was born April 10, 1647, at Ditchley in Oxfordshire. After a grammatical education at the school of Burford, he entered a nobleman into Wadham College in 1659, only twelve years old; and in 1661, at fourteen, was, with some other persons of high rank, made master of arts by Lord Clarendon in person.

He travelled afterwards into France and Italy; and, at his return, devoted himself to the Court. In 1665 he went to sea with Sandwich, and distinguished himself at Bergen by uncommon intrepidity; and the next summer  
served

served again on board Sir Edward Spragge, who, in the heat of the engagement, having a message of reproof to send to one of his captains, could find no man ready to carry it but Wilmot, who, in an open boat, went and returned amidst the storm of shot.

But his reputation for bravery was not lasting: he was reproached with flinching away in street quarrels, and leaving his companions to shift as they could without him; and Sheffield Duke of Buckingham has left a story of his refusal to fight him.

He had very early an inclination to intemperance, which he totally subdued in his travels; but, when he became a courtier, he unhappily addicted himself to dissolute and vicious company, by which his principles were corrupted, and his manners depraved. He lost all sense of religious restraint; and, finding it not convenient to admit the authority of laws which he was resolved not to obey, sheltered his wickedness behind infidelity.

As he excelled in that noisy and licentious merriment which wine incites, his companions eagerly encouraged him in excess, and he willingly indulged it; till, as he confessed to Dr.  
Bur-

Burnet, he was for five years together continually drunk, or so much inflamed by frequent ebriety, as in no interval to be master of himself.

In this state he played many frolicks, which it is not for his honour that we should remember, and which are not now distinctly known. He often pursued low amours in mean disguises, and always acted with great exactness and dexterity the characters which he assumed.

He once erected a stage on Tower-hill, and harangued the populace as a mountebank, and, having made physick part of his study, is said to have practised it successfully.

He was so much in favour with King Charles, that he was made one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, and comptroller of Woodstock Park.

Having an active and inquisitive mind, he never, except in his paroxysms of intemperance, was wholly negligent of study: he read what is considered as polite learning so much, that he is mentioned by Wood as the greatest scholar of all the nobility. Sometimes he retired into the country, and amused himself with



with writing libels, in which he did not pretend to confine himself to truth.

His favourite author in French was Boileau, and in English Cowley.

Thus in a course of drunken gaiety, and gross sensuality, with intervals of study perhaps yet more criminal, with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, a total disregard to every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation, he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness; till, at the age of one and thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay.

At this time he was led to an acquaintance with Dr. Burnet, to whom he laid open with great freedom the tenour of his opinions, and the course of his life, and from whom he received such conviction of the reasonableness of moral duty, and the truth of Christianity, as produced a total change both of his manners and opinions. The account of those salutary consequences is given by Burnet, in a book intituled, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of John Earl of Rochester*, which the critick ought

ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety. It were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgement.

He died July 26, 1680, before he had completed his thirty-fourth year; and was so worn away by a long illness, that life went out without a struggle.

Lord Rochester was eminent for the vigour of his colloquial wit, and remarkable for many wild pranks and sallies of extravagance. The glare of his general character diffused itself upon his writings; the compositions of a man whose name was heard so often were certain of attention, and from many readers certain of applause. This blaze of reputation is not yet quite extinguished; and his poetry still retains some splendour beyond that which genius has bestowed.

Wood and Burnet give us reason to believe, that much was imputed to him which he did not write. I know not by whom the original collection was made, or by what authority its genuineness was ascertained. The first edition was published in the year of his death, with an  
air

air of concealment, professing in the title page to be printed at *Antwerp*.

Of some of the pieces, however, there is no doubt. The Imitation of Horace's Satire, the Verses to Lord Mulgrave, the Satire against Man, the Verses upon *Nothing*, and perhaps some others, are I believe genuine, and perhaps most of those which this collection exhibits.

As he cannot be supposed to have found leisure for any course of continued study, his pieces are commonly short, such as one fit of resolution would produce.

His songs have no particular character; they tell, like other songs, in smooth and easy language, of scorn and kindness, dismissal and desertion, absence and inconstancy, with the common places of artificial courtship. They are commonly smooth and easy; but have little nature, and little sentiment.

His imitation of Horace on Lucilius is not inelegant or unhappy. In the reign of Charles the Second began that adaptation, which has since been very frequent, of ancient poetry to present times; and perhaps few will be found where the parallelism is better preserved than in this.

this. The versification is indeed sometimes careless, but it is sometimes vigorous and weighty.

The strongest effort of his Muse is his poem upon *Nothing*. He is not the first who has chosen this barren topick for the boast of his fertility. There is a poem called *Nihil* in Latin by *Passerat*, a poet and critick of the sixteenth century in France; who, in his own epitaph, expresses his zeal for good poetry thus:

—Molliter ossa quiescent

Sint modo carminibus non onerata malis.

His works are not common, and therefore I shall subjoin his verses.

In examining this performance, *Nothing* must be considered as having not only a negative but a kind of positive signification; as I need not fear thieves, I have *nothing*, and *nothing* is a very powerful protector. In the first part of the sentence it is taken negatively; in the second it is taken positively, as an agent. In one of Boileau's lines it was a question, whether he should use *à rien faire*, or *à ne rien faire*; and the first was preferred, because it gave  
rien



*rien* a sense in some sort positive. *Nothing* can be a subject only in its positive sense, and such a sense is given it in the first line :

*Nothing*, thou elder brother ev'n to shade.

In this line, I know not whether he does not allude to a curious book *de Umbra*, by Wowerus, which, having told the qualities of *Shade*, concludes with a poem in which are these lines :

Jam primum terram validis circumspice claustris  
Suspendam totam, decus admirabile mundi  
Terrasque tractusque maris, camposque liquentes  
Aeris & vasti laqueata palatia cœli—  
Omnibus UMBRA prior.

The positive sense is generally preserved, with great skill, through the whole poem ; though sometimes in a subordinate sense, the negative *nothing* is injudiciously mingled. *Pasferat* confounds the two senses.

Another of his most vigorous pieces is his Lampoon on Sir Car Scroop, who, in a poem called *The Praise of Satire*, had some lines like these \* :

He who can push into a midnight fray  
His brave companion, and then run away,

\* I quote from memory. Dr. J.

Leaving him to be murder'd in the street,  
Then put it off with some buffoon conceit ;  
Him, thus dishonour'd, for a wit you own,  
And court him as top fidler of the town.

This was meant of Rochester, whose *buffoon conceit* was, I suppose, a saying often mentioned, that *every Man would be a Coward if he durst*; and drew from him those furious verses; to which Scroop made in reply an epigram, ending with these lines :

Thou canst hurt no man's fame with thy ill word;  
Thy pen is full as harmless as thy sword.

Of the satire against *Man*, Rochester can only claim what remains when all Boileau's part is taken away.

In all his works there is sprightliness and vigour, and every where may be found tokens of a mind which study might have carried to excellence. What more can be expected from a life spent in ostentatious contempt of regularity, and ended before the abilities of many other men began to be displayed?

## Poema Cl. V. JOANNIS PASSERATII,

Regii in Academia Parisiensi Professoris,

Ad ornatissimum virum ERRICUM MEMMIUM.

Janus adest, festæ poscunt sua dona Kalendæ,  
 Munus abest festis quod possim offerre Kalendis.  
 Siccine Castalius nobis exaruit humor?  
 Usque adeò ingenii nostri est exhausta facultas,  
 Immunem ut videat redeuntis janitor anni?  
 Quod nusquam est, potius nova per vestigia quæram.

Ecce autem partes dum sese versat in omnes  
 Invenit mea Musa NIHIL, ne despice munus.  
 Nam NIHIL est gemmis, NIHIL est pretiosius auro.  
 Huc animum, huc igitur vultus adverte benignos;  
 Res nova narratur quæ nulli audita priorum,  
 Ausonii & Graii dixerunt cætera vates,  
 Ausoniæ indictum NIHIL est Græcæque Camœnæ.

E cœlo quacunque Ceres sua prospicit arva,  
 Aut genitor liquidis orbem complectitur ulnis  
 Oceanus, NIHIL interitus & originis expers.  
 Immortale NIHIL, NIHIL omni parte beatum.  
 Quòd si hinc majestas et vis diuina probatur,  
 Num quid honore deùm, num quid dignabimur aris?  
 Conspectu lucis NIHIL est jucundius almæ,  
 Vere NIHIL, NIHIL irriguo formosius horto,

Floridius pratis, Zephyri clementius aura ;  
In bello sanctum NIHIL est, Martisque tumultu :  
Justum in pace NIHIL, NIHIL est in fœdere tutum.  
Felix cui NIHIL est, (fuerant hæc vota Tibullo)  
Non timet insidias ; fures, incendia temnit :  
Sollicitas sequitur nullo sub iudice lites.  
Ille ipse invictis qui subjicit omnia fati  
Zenonis sapiens, NIHIL admiratur & optat.  
Socraticique gregis fuit ista scientia quondam,  
Scire NIHIL, studio cui nunc incumbitur uni.  
Nec quicquam in ludo mavult didicisse juvenis,  
Ad magnas quia ducit opes, & culmen honorum.  
Nosce NIHIL, nosces fertur quod Pythagoreæ  
Grano hædere fabæ, cui vox adjuncta negantis.  
Multi Mercurio freti duce viscera terræ  
Pura liquefaciunt simul, & patrimonia miscent,  
Arcano instantes operi, & carbonibus atris,  
Qui tandem exhausti damnis, fractique labore,  
Inveniunt atque inventum NIHIL usque requirunt,  
Hoc dimetiri non ulla decempeda possit :  
Nec numeret Libycæ numerum qui callet arenæ :  
Et Phœbo ignotum NIHIL est, NIHIL altius astris,  
Túque, tibi licet eximium sit mentis acumen,  
Omnem in naturam penetrans, et in abdita rerum,  
Pace tua, Memmi, NIHIL ignorare vidêris.  
Sole tamen NIHIL est, & puro clarius igne.  
Tange NIHIL, dicesque NIHIL sine corpore tangi.  
Cerne NIHIL, cerni dices NIHIL absque colore.

Surdum



Surdum audit loquitúrque NIHIL sine voce, volátque  
Absque ope pennarum, & graditur sine cruribus ullis.  
Absque loco motuque NIHIL per inane vagatur.  
Humano generi utilius NIHIL arte medendi.  
Ne rhombos igitur, neu Thessala murmura tentet  
Idalia vacuum trajectus arundine pectus,  
Neu legat Idæo Dictæum in vertice gramen.  
Vulneribus sævi NIHIL auxiliatur amoris.  
Vexerit & quemvis trans mœstas portitor undas,  
Ad superos imo NIHIL hunc revocabit ab orco.  
Inferni NIHIL inflectit præcordia regis,  
Parcarúmque colos, & inexorabile pensum.  
Obruta Phlegæis campis Titania pubes  
Fulmineo sensit NIHIL esse potentius ictu:  
Porrigitur magni NIHIL extra mœnia mundi:  
Diique NIHIL metuunt. Quid longo carmine plura  
Commemorem? virtute NIHIL præstantius ipsa,  
Splendidius NIHIL est; NIHIL est Jove denique majus.  
Sed tempus finem argutis imponere nugis:  
Ne tibi si multa laudem mea carmina charta,  
De NIHILO NIHILI pariant fastidia versus.

## R O S C O M M O N.

**W**ENTWORTH DILLON, Earl of Roscommon, was the son of James Dillon and Elizabeth Wentworth, sister to the earl of Strafford. He was born in Ireland, during the lieutenancy of Strafford, who, being both his uncle and his godfather, gave him his own surname. His father, the third earl of Roscommon, had been converted by Usher to the protestant religion; and when the popish rebellion broke out, Strafford thinking the family in great danger from the fury of the Irish, sent for his godson, and placed him at his own seat in Yorkshire, where he was instructed in Latin; which he learned so as to write it with purity and elegance, though he was never able to retain the rules of grammar.

Such

Such is the account given by Mr. *Fenton*, from whose notes on Waller most of this account must be borrowed, though I know not whether all that he relates is certain. The instructor whom he assigns to Roscommon is one Dr. *Hall*, by whom he cannot mean the famous *Hall*, then an old man and a bishop.

When the storm broke out upon Strafford, his house was a shelter no longer; and Dillon, by the advice of Usher, was sent to *Caen*, where the Protestants had then an university, and continued his studies under *Bochart*.

Young Dillon, who was sent to study under Bochart, and who is represented as having already made great proficiency in literature, could not be more than nine years old. Strafford went to govern Ireland in 1633, and was put to death eight years afterwards. That he was sent to *Caen*, is certain: that he was a great scholar, may be doubted.

At *Caen* he is said to have had some preternatural intelligence of his father's death.

“ The lord Roscommon, being a boy of  
 “ ten years of age, at *Caen* in Normandy, one  
 “ day was, as it were, madly extravagant in  
 “ playing, leaping, getting over the tables,  
 U 4 “ boards,

“ boards, &c. He was wont to be sober  
 “ enough ; they said, God grant this bodes  
 “ no ill-luck to him ! In the heat of this extra-  
 “ vagant fit, he cries out, *My father is dead.*  
 “ A fortnight after, news came from Ireland  
 “ that his father was dead. This account I  
 “ had from Mr. Knolles, who was his gover-  
 “ nor, and then with him,—since secretary to  
 “ the earl of Strafford ; and I have heard his  
 “ lordship’s relations confirm the same.” *Au-  
 brey’s Miscellany.*

The present age is very little inclined to fa-  
 vour any accounts of this kind, nor will the name  
 of Aubrey much recommend it to credit: it ought  
 not, however, to be omitted, because better  
 evidence of a fact cannot easily be found than is  
 here offered, and it must be by preserving such  
 relations that we may at last judge how much  
 they are to be regarded. If we stay to examine  
 this account, we shall see difficulties on both  
 sides : here is the relation of a fact given by a  
 man who had no interest to deceive, and who  
 could not be deceived himself ; and here is, on  
 the other hand, a miracle which produces no  
 effect ; the order of nature is interrupted to dis-  
 cover not a future but only a distant event,  
 the



the knowledge of which is of no use to him to whom it is revealed. Between these difficulties, what way shall be found? Is reason or testimony to be rejected; I believe what Osborne says of an appearance of sanctity may be applied to such impulses or anticipations as this: *Do not wholly slight them, because they may be true; but do not easily trust them, because they may be false.*

The state both of England and Ireland was at this time such, that he who was absent from either country had very little temptation to return: and therefore Roscommon, when he left Caen, travelled into Italy, and amused himself with its antiquities, and particularly with medals, in which he acquired uncommon skill.

At the Restoration, with the other friends of monarchy, he came to England, was made captain of the band of pensioners, and learned so much of the dissoluteness of the court, that he addicted himself immoderately to gaming, by which he was engaged in frequent quarrels, and which undoubtedly brought upon him its usual concomitants, extravagance and distress.

After

After some time a dispute about part of his estate forced him into Ireland, where he was made by the duke of Ormond captain of the guards, and met with an adventure thus related by *Fenton*.

“ He was at Dublin as much as ever distempered with the same fatal affection for play, which engaged him in one adventure that well deserves to be related. As he returned to his lodgings from a gaming-table, he was attacked in the dark by three ruffians, who were employed to assassinate him. The Earl defended himself with so much resolution, that he dispatched one of the aggressors; whilst a gentleman, accidentally passing that way, interposed, and disarmed another: the third secured himself by flight. This generous assistant was a disbanded officer, of a good family and fair reputation; who, by what we call the partiality of fortune, to avoid censuring the iniquities of the times, wanted even a plain suit of cloaths to make a decent appearance at the castle. But his lordship, on this occasion, presenting him to the Duke of Ormond, with great importunity prevailed with his grace, that he might  
“ resign

“ resign his post of captain of the guards to his  
 “ friend; which for about three years the gen-  
 “ tleman enjoyed, and, upon his death, the  
 “ duke returned the commission to his generous  
 “ benefactor.”

When he had finished his business, he returned to London; was made Master of the Horse to the Dutchess of York; and married the Lady Frances, daughter of the Earl of Burlington, and widow of Colonel Courteney.

He now busied his mind with literary projects, and formed the plan of a society for refining our language and fixing its standard; *in imitation*, says Fenton, *of those learned and polite societies with which he had been acquainted abroad.* In this design his friend Dryden is said to have assisted him.

The same design, it is well known, was revived by Dr. Swift in the ministry of Oxford; but it has never since been publicly mentioned, though at that time great expectations were formed by some of its establishment and its effects. Such a society might, perhaps, without much difficulty, be collected; but that it  
 would.

would produce what is expected from it, may be doubted.

The Italian academy seems to have obtained its end. The language was refined, and so fixed that it has changed but little. The French academy thought that they refined their language, and doubtless thought rightly; but the event has not shewn that they fixed it; for the French of the present time is very different from that of the last century.

In this country an academy could be expected to do but little. If an academician's place were profitable, it would be given by interest; if attendance were gratuitous, it would be rarely paid, and no man would endure the least disgust. Unanimity is impossible, and debate would separate the assembly.

But suppose the philological decree made and promulgated, what would be its authority? In absolute governments, there is sometimes a general reverence paid to all that has the sanction of power, and the countenance of greatness. How little this is the state of our country needs not to be told. We live in an age in which it is a kind of public sport to refuse all respect that cannot be enforced. The edicts

of



of an English academy would probably be read by many, only that they might be sure to disobey them.

That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority, and therefore nothing is left but that every writer should criticise himself.

All hopes of new literary institutions were quickly suppressed by the contentious turbulence of King James's reign; and Roscommon, foreseeing that some violent concussion of the State was at hand, purposed to retire to Rome, alleging, that *it was best to sit near the chimney when the chamber smoaked*; a sentence, of which the application seems not very clear.

His departure was delayed by the gout; and he was so impatient either of hindrance or of pain, that he submitted himself to a French empirick, who is said to have repelled the disease into his bowels.

At the moment in which he expired, he uttered, with an energy of voice that expressed the most fervent devotion, two lines of his own version of *Dies Iræ*:

My

My God, my Father, and my Friend,  
Do not forsake me in my end.

He died in 1684; and was buried with great pomp in Westminster-Abbey.

His poetical character is given by Mr. Fenton :

“ In his writings,” says Fenton, “ we view  
“ the image of a mind which was naturally seri-  
“ ous and solid : richly furnished and adorned  
“ with all the ornaments of learning, unaf-  
“ fectedly disposed in the most regular and ele-  
“ gant order. His imagination might have  
“ probably been more fruitful and sprightly, if  
“ his judgement had been less severe. But  
“ that severity (delivered in a masculine, clear,  
“ succinct style) contributed to make him so  
“ eminent in the didactical manner, that no  
“ man, with justice, can affirm he was ever  
“ equalled by any of our nation, without con-  
“ fessing at the same time that he is inferior  
“ to none. In some other kinds of writing  
“ his genius seems to have wanted fire to  
“ attain the point of perfection ; but who can  
“ attain it ?”

From this account of the riches of his mind,  
who would not imagine that they had been dis-  
played

played in large volumes and numerous performances? who would not, after the perusal of this character, be surpris'd to find that all the proofs of this genius, and knowledge and judgement, are not sufficient to form a single book, or to appear otherwise than in conjunction with the works of some other writer of the same petty size \*? But thus it is that characters are written: we know somewhat, and we imagine the rest. The observation, that his imagination would probably have been more fruitful and sprightly if his judgement had been less severe, may be answered, by a remarker somewhat inclined to cavil, by a contrary supposition, that his judgement would probably have been less severe, if his imagination had been more fruitful. It is ridiculous

\* They were published together with those of Duke, in an octavo volume, in 1717. The editor, whoever he was, professes to have taken great care to procure and insert all of his lordship's poems that are truly genuine. The truth of this assertion is flatly denied by the author of an account of Mr. John Pomfret, prefixed to his Remains; who asserts, that the Prospect of Death was written by that person many years after lord Roscommon's decease; as also, that the paraphrase of the Prayer of Jeremy was written by a gentleman of the name of Southcourt, living in the year 1724. H.

to oppose judgement to imagination; for it does not appear that men have necessarily less of one as they have more of the other.

We must allow of Roscommon, what Fenton has not mentioned so distinctly as he ought, and what is yet very much to his honour, that he is perhaps the only correct writer in verse before Addison; and that, if there are not so many or so great beauties in his compositions as in those of some contemporaries, there are at least fewer faults. Nor is this his highest praise; for Mr. Pope has celebrated him as the only moral writer of King Charles's reign:

Unhappy Dryden! in all Charles's days,  
Roscommon only boasts unspotted lays.

His great work is his Essay on Translated Verse; of which Dryden writes thus in the preface to his Miscellanies:

“It was my Lord Roscommon's Essay on  
“Translated Verse,” says Dryden, “which  
“made me uneasy, till I tried whether or no  
“I was capable of following his rules, and of  
“reducing the speculation into practice. For  
“many a fair precept in poetry is like a seem-  
“ing demonstration in mathematicks, very  
“specious



“specious in the diagram, but failing in the  
 “mechanick operation. I think I have gene-  
 “rally observed his instructions: I am sure  
 “my reason is sufficiently convinced both of  
 “their truth and usefulness; which, in other  
 “words, is to confess no less a vanity than to  
 “pretend that I have, at least in some places,  
 “made examples to his rules.”

This declaration of Dryden will, I am afraid, be found little more than one of those cursory civilities which one author pays to another; for when the sum of lord Roscommon's precepts is collected, it will not be easy to discover how they can qualify their reader for a better performance of translation than might have been attained by his own reflections.

He that can abstract his mind from the elegance of the poetry, and confine it to the sense of the precepts, will find no other direction than that the author should be suitable to the translator's genius; that he should be such as may deserve a translation; that he who intends to translate him should endeavour to understand him; that perspicuity should be studied, and unusual and uncouth names sparingly inserted; and that the style of the original should

be copied in its elevation and depreſſion. Theſe are the rules that are celebrated as ſo definite and important; and for the delivery of which to mankind ſo much honour has been paid. Roſcommon has indeed deſerved his praiſes, had they been given with diſcernment, and beſtowed not on the rules themſelves, but the art with which they are introduced, and the decorations with which they are adorned.

The Eſſay, though generally excellent, is not without its faults. The ſtory of the Quack, borrowed from Boileau, was not worth the importation: he has confounded the Britiſh and Saxon mythology:

I grant that from ſome moſſy idol oak,  
In double rhymes, our *Thor* and *Woden* ſpoke.

The oak, as I think Gildon has obſerved, belonged to the Britiſh druids, and *Thor* and *Woden* were Saxon deities. Of the *double rhymes*, which he ſo liberally ſuppoſes, he certainly had no knowledge.

His interpoſition of a long paragraph of blank verſes is unwarrantably licentious. Latin poets might as well have introduced a ſeries of iambicks among their heroicks.

Hi

His next work is the translation of the Art of Poetry; which has received, in my opinion, not less praise than it deserves. Blank verse, left merely to its numbers, has little operation either on the ear or mind: it can hardly support itself without bold figures and striking images. A poem frigidly didactick, without rhyme, is so near to prose, that the reader only scorns it for pretending to be verse.

Having disentangled himself from the difficulties of rhyme, he may justly be expected to give the sense of Horace with great exactness, and to suppress no subtilty of sentiment for the difficulty of expressing it. This demand, however, his translation will not satisfy; what he found obscure, I do not know that he has ever cleared.

Among his smaller works, the Eclogue of Virgil and the *Dies Iræ* are well translated; though the best line in the *Dies Iræ* is borrowed from Dryden. In return, succeeding poets have borrowed from Roscommon.

In the verses on the Lap-dog, the pronouns *thou* and *you* are offensively confounded; and the turn at the end is from Waller.

His versions of the two odes of Horace are made with great liberty, which is not recompensed by much elegance or vigour.

His political verses are spritely, and when they were written must have been very popular.

Of the scene of *Guarini*, and the prologue to *Pompey*, Mrs. Philips, in her letters to Sir Charles Cotterel, has given the history.

“Lord Roscommon,” says she, “is certainly one of the most promising young noblemen in Ireland. He has paraphrased a Psalm admirably, and a scene of *Pastor Fido* very finely, in some places much better than Sir Richard Fanshawe. This was undertaken merely in compliment to me, who happened to say that it was the best scene in Italian, and the worst in English. He was only two hours about it. It begins thus:

“Dear happy groves, and you the dark retreat  
“Of silent horror, Rest’s eternal seat.”

From these lines, which are since somewhat mended, it appears that he did not think a work of two hours fit to endure the eye of criticism without revival.

When



When Mrs. Philips was in Ireland, some ladies, that had seen her translation of Pompey, resolved to bring it on the stage at Dublin; and, to promote their design, Lord Roscommon gave them a prologue, and Sir Edward Dering an epilogue; “which,” says she, “are the best performances of those kinds I ever saw.” If this is not criticism, it is at least gratitude. The thought of bringing Cæsar and Pompey into Ireland, the only country over which Cæsar never had any power, is lucky.

Of Roscommon’s works, the judgement of the publick seems to be right. He is elegant, but not great; he never labours after exquisite beauties, and he seldom falls into gross faults. His versification is smooth, but rarely vigorous, and his rhymes are remarkably exact. He improved taste, if he did not enlarge knowledge, and may be numbered among the benefactors to English literature.

## O T W A Y.

OF THOMAS OTWAY, one of the first names in the English drama, little is known; nor is there any part of that little which his biographer can take pleasure in relating.

He was born at Trotton in Suffex, March 3, 1651, the son of Mr. Humphry Otway, rector of *Woolbeding*. From Winchester-school, where he was educated, he was entered, in 1669, a commoner of Christ-church; but left the university without a degree, whether for want of money, or from impatience of academical restraint, or mere eagerness to mingle with the world, is not known.

It seems likely that he was in hope of being busy and conspicuous: for he went to London,  
and

and commenced player; but found himself unable to gain any reputation on the stage\*.

This kind of inability he shared with Shakspeare and Jonson, as he shared likewise some of their excellences. It seems reasonable to expect that a great dramattick poet should without difficulty become a great actor; that he who can feel, could express; that he who can excite passion, should exhibit with great readiness its external modes: but since experience has fully proved that of those powers, whatever be their affinity, one may be possessed in a great degree by him who has very little of the other; it must be allowed that they depend upon different faculties, or on different use of the same faculty; that the actor must have a pliancy of mien, a flexibility of countenance, and a variety of tones, which the poet may be easily supposed to want; or that the attention of the poet and the player have been differently employed; the one has been considering thought, and the other

\* In *Roscius Anglicanus* by Downes the prompter, p. 34, we learn that it was the character of the King in Mrs. Behn's *Forced Marriage, or The Jealous Bridegroom*, which Mr. Otway attempted to perform and failed in. This event appears to have happened in the year 1672. E.

action ; one has watched the heart, and the other contemplated the face.

Though he could not gain much notice as a player, he felt in himself such powers as might qualify for a dramtick author ; and, in 1675, his twenty-fifth year, produced *Alcibiades*, a tragedy ; whether from the *Alcibiade* of *Palaprat*, I have not means to enquire. Langbain, the great detector of plagiarism, is silent.

In 1677 he published *Titus and Berenice*, translated from Rapin, with the *Cheats of Scapin* from Moliere ; and in 1678 *Friendship in Fashion*, a comedy, which, whatever might be its first reception, was, upon its revival at Drury-lane in 1746, hissed off the stage for immorality and obscenity.

Want of morals, or of decency, did not in those days exclude any man from the company of the wealthy and the gay, if he brought with him any powers of entertainment ; and Otway is said to have been at this time a favourite companion of the dissolute wits. But as he who desires no virtue in his companion has no virtue in himself, those whom Otway frequented had no purpose of doing more for him than to pay his reckoning. They desired only to  
drink



drink and laugh; their fondness was without benevolence, and their familiarity without friendship. Men of wit, says one of Otway's biographers, received at that time no favour from the Great but to share their riots; *from which they were dismissed again to their own narrow circumstances. Thus they languished in poverty without the support of eminence.*

Some exception, however, must be made. The Earl of Plymouth, one of King Charles's natural sons, procured for him a cornet's commission in some troops then sent into Flanders. But Otway did not prosper in his military character; for he soon left his commission behind him, whatever was the reason, and came back to London in extreme indigence; which Rochester mentions with merciless insolence in the *Session of the Poets*:

Tom Otway came next, Tom Shadwell's dear zany,  
And swears for heroicks he writes best of any;  
Don Carlos his pockets so amply had fill'd,  
That his mange was quite cured, and his lice  
were all kill'd.

But Apollo had seen his face on the stage,  
And prudently did not think fit to engage  
The scum of a play-house, for the prop of an age. }

*Don*

*Don Carlos*, from which he is represented as having received so much benefit, was played in 1675. It appears, by the Lampoon, to have had great success, and is said to have been played thirty nights together. This however it is reasonable to doubt, as so long a continuance of one play upon the stage is a very wide deviation from the practice of that time: when the ardour for theatrical entertainments was not yet diffused through the whole people, and the audience, consisting nearly of the same persons, could be drawn together only by variety.

The *Orphan* was exhibited in 1680. This is one of the few plays that keep possession of the stage, and has pleased for almost a century, through all the vicissitudes of dramatick fashion. Of this play nothing new can easily be said. It is a domestick tragedy drawn from middle life. Its whole power is upon the affections; for it is not written with much comprehension of thought, or elegance of expression. But if the heart is interested, many other beauties may be wanting, yet not be missed.

The same year produced *the History and Fall of Caius Marius*; much of which is borrowed

rowed from the *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare.

In 1683 \* was published the first, and next year † the second, parts of *The Soldier's Fortune*, two comedies now forgotten: and in 1685 ‡ his last and greatest dramattick work, *Venice preserved*, a tragedy, which still continues to be one of the favourites of the publick, notwithstanding the want of morality in the original design, and the despicable scenes of vile comedy with which he has diversified his tragick action. By comparing this with his *Orphan*, it will appear that his images were by time become stronger, and his language more energetick. The striking passages are in every mouth; and the publick seems to judge rightly of the faults and excellencies of this play, that it is the work of a man not attentive to decency, nor zealous for virtue; but of one who conceived forcibly, and drew originally, by consulting nature in his own breast.

Together with those plays he wrote the poems which are in the present collection, and translated from the French the *History of the Triumvirate*.

\* 1681.

† 1684.

‡ 1682.

All

All this was performed before he was thirty-four years old; for he died April 14, 1685, in a manner which I am unwilling to mention. Having been compelled by his necessities to contract debts, and hunted, as is supposed, by the tarriers of the law, he retired to a publick house on Tower-hill, where he is said to have died of want; or, as it is related by one of his biographers, by swallowing, after a long fast, a piece of bread which charity had supplied. He went out, as is reported, almost naked, in the rage of hunger, and, finding a gentleman in a neighbouring coffee-house, asked him for a shilling. The gentleman gave him a guinea; and Otway going away bought a roll, and was choaked with the first mouthful. All this, I hope, is not true; and there is this ground of better hope, that Pope, who lived near enough to be well informed, relates in Spence's memorials, that he died of a fever caught by violent pursuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends. But that indigence, and its concomitants, sorrow and despondency, pressed hard upon him, has never been denied, whatever immediate cause might bring him to the grave.



Of the poems which the present collection admits, the longest is the *Poet's Complaint of his Muse*, part of which I do not understand; and in that which is less obscure I find little to commend. The language is often gross, and the numbers are harsh. Otway had not much cultivated versification, nor much replenished his mind with general knowledge. His principal power was in moving the passions, to which Dryden \* in his latter years left an illustrious testimony. He appears by some of his verses to have been a zealous royalist, and had what was in those times the common reward of loyalty; he lived and died neglected.

\* In his preface to Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*. Dr. J.

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